



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	233
Immortal India	
Editorial	234
Mundaka-Upanishad	
Swami Sridharananda	241
The Glory of Devotion	245
A Visit by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi	248
Sanskrit in Contemporary Society	
Dr. A. Sadanandan	249
Dhamma and Science	
Prof. P.L. Dhar	253
The World He Came to	
P. Shneidre	262
Technical Education for a Better Tomorrow	
Swami Tattwajnanananda	265

(Continued on next page)

CONTENTS (Contd.)

Youth Forum:	Reviews and Notices 275
Synopsis of Question-Answer Sessions	
<i>Swami Nikhileswarananda</i> 270	Human Excellence 280
News and Reports 272	

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 102

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No. 2

Divine Wisdom

REALIZATION OF THE DIVINE

(Sage Kapila to his mother Devahūti)

देहोऽपि दैववशाः खलु कर्म यावत्-

स्वारम्भकं प्रतिसमीक्षत एव सासुः।

तं सप्रपञ्चमधिरूढसमाधियोगः

स्वाप्नं पुनर्न भजते प्रतिबुद्धवस्तुः॥

The body, which is subject to Karma, will continue to live so long as the Prarabdha that has brought it into existence lasts. But one who has attained to the state of Samadhi and awakened to the Truth, will not identify oneself with the body and the world of which it is a part, just as one who has awakened from a dream no longer identifies himself with the actor in the dream.

यथा पुत्राच्च वित्ताच्च पृतङ्मर्त्यः प्रतीयते।

अप्यात्मत्वेनाभिमताद्देहादेः पुरुषस्तथा॥

Just as a man knows himself to be different from his sons and wealth, however dear these might be to him through close association with them, even so he is in his true self different from the body-mind combination (with which he is identified in his

state of ignorance).

यथोल्मुकाद्विस्फुलिङ्गाद्भूमाद्वापि स्वसम्भवात्।

अप्यात्मत्वेनाभिमताद्यथाग्निः पृथगुल्मुकात्॥

Just as in a burning faggot, the fire is different from the faggot as well as from the smoke and sparks coming out of it, so also the Atman is distinct from the body-mind combination and its offshoots, with which one is identified (in the state of ignorance).

भूतेन्द्रियान्तःकरणात्प्रधानाज्जीवसंज्ञितात्।

आत्मा तथा पृतङ्द्रष्टा भगवान् ब्रह्मसंज्ञितः॥

In the same way the Supreme Spirit, who is called Bhagavan and Brahman, is distinct from all other entities—the *Pradhana* (unevolved nature) and all the categories that spring from it, as also from the Jiva (the individual self) in the state of ignorance. He is the witness of all these.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 3.2.8.38-41

Immortal India

Last month we had occasion to contemplate Swamiji's love for mankind, which love extended beyond the borders of his own motherland. We had seen in him a capacity for deifying all existence and converting all work into worship. Every concrete object in this universe echoed the presence of the all-pervading Brahman and every abstract principle reflected the continuing endeavour of humankind to manifest human excellence which, again, is derived from that divine source. Rightly did Swamiji say that purity, power, nobility, goodness, and everything else that is ennobling and elevating will become manifest in every human being when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity. And, as a corollary, it is true that the decline is inevitable, be it slow or fast, when the vigour of a nation is depleted owing to a lack of, or a restricted culture of, this 'Self'-awareness. In the context of the importance of rooting oneself in the knowledge of the Self, Swamiji says:

And if we read the history of nations between the lines, we shall always find that the rise of a nation comes with an increase in the number of such men; and the fall begins when this pursuit after the Infinite, however vain Utilitarians may call it, has ceased. That is to say, *the main-spring of the strength of every race lies in its spirituality, and the death of that race begins the day that spirituality wanes and materialism gains ground.*¹

Swamiji looked upon 'man's striving

day and night to make the Infinite one with our being...the grandest and most glorious that man can make'².

History of Nations

It is owing to the penetrating intellect of Swami Vivekananda that he could discover the cyclic phenomena in the realm of the history of nations. From a study of history and from an intuitive understanding of the rise and fall of nations, civilizations and cultures, Swamiji could extract more information than what one gets from a mere superficial reading of books. In a lecture delivered at the Shakespeare Club, Pasadena, California, on 3 February 1900, Swamiji said:

The universe, according to the theory of the Hindus, is moving in cycles of wave forms. It rises, reaches its zenith, then falls and remains in the hollow... once more to rise, and so on, in wave after wave and fall after fall. What is true of the universe is true of every part of it. The march of human affairs is like that. The history of nations is like that: they rise and they fall; ...again out of the fall comes a rise, with greater power. This motion is always going on.³

This is with reference to rise and fall of each nation, the cyclical shift between emphasis on material comforts and emphasis on spiritual verities, in a simplified language. There is another way to look at the cyclical phenomenon which requires a deeper study to grasp the significance:

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 65. [Hereafter CW.]

2. CW, vol. 2, pp. 65-6.

3. CW, vol. 4, p. 120.

According to the prevalence, in greater or lesser degree, of the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas in man, the four castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, are everywhere present at all times, in all civilized societies. By the mighty hand of time, their number and power also vary at different times in regard to different countries. In some countries the numerical strength or influence of one of these castes may preponderate over another; at some period, one of the classes may be more powerful than the rest. But from a careful study of the history of the world, it appears that in conformity to the law of nature, the four castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra do, in every society, one after another in succession, govern the world.⁴

The supreme power of guiding society was, in the first period of Indian history, in the hands of the Brahmin or the priest. The Brahminical class, by virtue of its acquisition of learning from the Vedas, and the performance of many religious and social rites from birth to death of every human, exerted unimaginable control over the other classes. However, the Kshatriya class concentrated most of its energies on the development of art and culture, and simultaneously ensured supremacy in military power, mainly to protect their subjects, including the Brahmins. In course of time however, the Kshatriyas, time and again, tried to gain supremacy over the Brahmin class. Like a sea-saw, the Brahminical brain power and Kshatriya prowess alternately rose to power. However, soon there was no more any glorious warlike valour left in the Kshatriya. And likewise, there was left none of the spiritual brilliance in the Brahmin. Consequent on this perpetual power struggle both the classes lost their intrinsic worth.

When the Mohammedan invaders marched into India at such an hour of decadence, it was quite an easy task for them to usurp the throne. Power thus passed on to the kingly class once again, though the rulers now were not Indians and belonged to a foreign religion! Under the Mohammedan rule, the Brahmin class lost all chances for rising to supremacy. However, it must be said to the credit of the Mohammedan rule that there was a revival in art and culture during this period.

Then came the Vaishya (merchant) class, the East India Company, into the picture. Despite its wealth, the Vaishya class was always afraid of the royal throne and remained subservient. Now uniting themselves and crossing rivers and seas on the pretext of doing business, they made the Hindu and Mohammedan kings in India and the British Royalty mere puppets by dint of their intelligence and wealth. The Vaishya class—meaning the East India Company—, by means of the wealth at its command, could buy the learning of the Brahmin class and the valour of the Kshatriya class! They also used their intelligence to invent means by which the faith of India's intelligentsia in their rich religious and cultural traditions was uprooted. However, during the supremacy of the Vaishya class there was accumulation of wealth. But 'true' knowledge was to be acquired from the discoveries in science and technology as taught by the British in their mothertongue, the knowledge given out by the ancient rishis of India in Sanskrit being projected as useless! The British were the rulers and they held the wealth and economy of the land in their possession. All that was left of India was the Shudra (working) class, the ever-forbearing masses of India.

Thus we see that the Brahmins with their strength in learning, the Kshatriyas with their power in arms and weapons, and

4. CW, vol. 4, p. 449.

the Vaishyas with their might in wealth, all had their day. Now it was the turn of the Shudras who so long have been feeding the other classes with the sweat of their brow.

What we had in India at this time were only deep-rooted envy and strong antipathy against one another, morbid desire to ruin by hook or by crook the weak, and to lick dog-like the feet of the strong⁵. Such was the pitiable state to which we had sunk.

What was the cause of this degradation? Certainly there was the craze for gaining privilege and supremacy. And this clinging to privileges and the infights for gaining supremacy only led to a loss of national vitality. Without this growing weakness it was not in the power of foreign invaders to find a venue for their plundering. Says Swamiji, 'No bacilli can attack the human frame until it is degraded and degenerated by vice, bad food, privation, and exposure; the healthy man passes scatheless through masses of poisonous bacilli.'⁶

Each of the higher classes, the Brahmin, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya concentrated its effort on accumulation of power be it learning, arms and weapons, or wealth. That in itself was good and desirable. The caste division ensured that there was a division of the society into groups which could, without competition, cultivate one or the other aspect of human excellence. But the people belonging to higher castes forgot that this accumulation should have been followed by a diffusion of these treasures of which they were merely the repository. Thus the bulk of the Indian population who belonged to the Shudra class (the working class) on whose toils the other castes depended for their existence, were not lifted up. The neglect of the masses, the neglect of women, religious

practices that were not consonant with the wisdom of the ancient sages and a false superiority complex which made the Indians think that all that was good was in them already, that there was no need to compare notes with other nations as regards the progress made by them, that they had no role to play in the march of other nations, all collectively brought down the land once famous for its wealth of learning and riches. History can and does repeat itself, and so we ought to pay heed to these warnings of the Swami.

Neglect of the masses

The structure of Indian society was such that learning, arms and riches were in the hands of a few. Naturally, because it required brain power, valour or commercial enterprise to belong to these higher castes. The vast majority could contribute only muscle power and they, the subject masses, had merely the privilege to labour and bring forth the produce of the land. They had, during that dark period of Indian history, no right to that learning which was the privilege of the Brahmins. Says Swamiji:

There are books where you read such fierce words as these: 'If the Shudra hears the Vedas, fill his ears with molten lead, and if he remembers a line, cut his tongue out. If he says to the Brahmin, "You Brahmin", cut his tongue out'. This is diabolical old barbarism....⁷

Added to this state of the caste system which, in main, is hereditary, was another peculiarity. Any member belonging to the Shudra class, if he possessed some exceptional qualities, was raised to a corresponding higher class⁸ while all those who had fallen from the noble qualities required of those belonging to the higher castes were shunted to the Shudra class. Thus, on both

5. CW, vol. 4, p. 467.

6. CW, vol. 3, p. 167.

7. CW, vol. 3, p. 295.

8. For some examples, see CW, vol. 4, p. 469.

counts, the Shudra class stood to lose. Had the caste system been purely hereditary, the sparse better specimen in the Shudra class could have worked *within* their own group for *their own* elevation. But that was not the case.

In exasperation Swami Vivekananda asks, 'Who ever thinks of the poor in India?' Highlighting the pitiable state of the masses during that time, Swamiji says,

Ay, in this country of ours, the very birth-place of the Vedanta, our masses have been hypnotised... To touch them is pollution, to sit with them is pollution! Hopeless they were born, hopeless they must remain! And the result is that they have been sinking... and have come to the last stage to which a human being can come. For what country is there in the world where man has to sleep with the cattle?⁹

Commenting on the unfortunate repression of the people of the lowest caste, Swamiji says:

To what a ludicrous state are we brought! If a Bhangi comes to anybody as a Bhangi, he would be shunned as the plague; but no sooner does he get a cupful of water poured upon his head with some mutterings of prayers by a Padri, and get a coat on his back, no matter how threadbare, and come into the room of the most orthodox Hindu—I don't see the man who then dare refuse him a chair and a hearty shake of the hands! Irony can go no further.¹⁰

Unlike in other countries, a man in India is poor not because he is sinful and squanders his wealth but because the wealth

he produces is snatched away from him and his children by the higher classes; they remain poorly fed and neglected. The higher classes lacked the foresight to see that their own preservation depended on doing welfare to these neglected masses. They forgot the maxim:

Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolize learning or wield the power of riches or arms, *the source of its power is always the subject masses. By so much as the class in power severs itself from this source, by so much is it sure to become weak.*¹¹

However, if the Shudra class rises to power retaining their Shudra-hood, there will be a certain decay in culture and that will mean another spell of degradation from the cultural standpoint. So Swami Vivekananda gave the clear warning that for the regeneration of India, the masses must be raised—they should be given food, clothes and education; they should be given back their lost individuality; and they should be raised culturally also.

Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them ideas; they will get information, but something more is necessary; give them culture. *Until you give them that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses.*¹²

Swamiji called upon the higher castes to 'open the gates of knowledge to one and all, and give the downtrodden masses once more their just and legitimate rights and privileges.'¹³

Status of women

After seeing the condition of women in

9. CW, vol. 3, p. 429.

10. CW, vol. 5, p. 5.

11. CW, vol. 4, p. 470.

12. CW, vol. 3, p. 291.

13. CW, vol. 3, p. 461.

the West, Swamiji felt very sad at the way we used to treat women in India. He believed that that country alone is fit to prosper where the women are held in esteem and he attributed the neglect of women as one of the major causes for the downfall of India. Quoting Manu, Swamiji says,

Where women are respected, there the gods delight; and where they are not, there all works and efforts come to naught.¹⁴

Lamenting over the condition of the women in India, Swamiji said, 'We are horrible sinners, and our degradation is due to our calling women "despicable worms", "gateways to hell", and so forth'.¹⁵ He was full of concern for the education of girls and said, 'Teach your girls fruit-modelling with hardened milk. Give them artistic cooking and sewing. Let them learn painting, photography, the cutting of designs in paper, and gold and silver filigree and embroidery'.¹⁶ After a visit to the Mahakali Pathasala, Swamiji remarked that 'ideal characters must always be presented before the girls to imbue them with a devotion to lofty principles of selflessness. The noble examples of Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Lilavati, Khana, and Mira should be inspired to mould their own lives in the light of these'.¹⁷ He was full of praise for the heroism and valour of the Rani of Jhansi and used to recount similar incidents from India's past.

Application of religion

India, the land that gave birth to noble thoughts in the realm of spirituality, is also

the land that failed to apply these principles in the daily life of her people. The ancient sages declared, 'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again.' However that knowledge was not spread to the masses, for, it was a *rahasya*, a secret. And yet the *Gita* says: 'Even they who are of sinful birth, women, Vaishyas, as also Shudras, taking refuge in Me, verily attain the highest good.'¹⁸

The sages also said, 'All that exists is verily Brahman', and 'Thou art the man, Thou art the woman, Thou art the young man walking in the pride of youth, Thou art the old man tottering in his step'. But in practical life, religious practice was reduced to a mockery. The focus was on the externals of religious practices, the many rituals involved in the worship of images, while the living God stood in need of a morsel of food. It became important whether the look of a particular person belonging to a lower caste had defiled the food to be offered to the deity. Further, religious truths became the property of a select few and carried with it privileges. It was Swamiji's intention to bring the religion of the forests and caves to the homes of every one. He believed that everyone should hear the truth, for, truth has in it the potency to reveal itself in the hearer sooner or later. That will, despite caste distinctions, simultaneously create also the faith that, though belonging to a particular caste, one has nonetheless the same divinity in oneself. The revival of this faith in the Self was needed. And it is quite easy to imagine the opposition Swamiji had to face.

The voices of harmony proclaimed: 'Truth is one; yet sages call it variously.'

14. CW, vol. 7, p. 215.

15. CW, vol. 6, p. 253.

16. CW, vol. 8, p. 275.

17. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by His Eastern and Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1993), vol. 2, p. 246.

18. Ch. 9, Sl. 32.

However, in the name of religion, we had sectarian quarrel. Swamiji portrays the extremes to which sectarian narrowness had been taken in his fascinating story about the Ghantakarna.

...the story is told of a devotee by the name of Ghantakarna or the Bell-eared, who was so devout a worshipper of Shiva that he did not wish even to hear the name of any other deity; so he wore two bells tied to his ears in order to drown the sound of any voice uttering other Divine names. On account of his intense devotion to Shiva, the latter wanted to teach him that there was no difference between Shiva and Vishnu, so He appeared before him as half Vishnu and half Shiva. At that moment the devotee was waving incense before Him, but so great was the bigotry of Ghantakarna that when he saw the fragrance of the incense entering the nostril of Vishnu, he thrust his finger into it to prevent the god from enjoying the sweet smell....¹⁹

Swamiji urged upon all Indians to put an end to sectarian quarrels which are based on differences in local customs or the non-essential part of religion, and unite themselves by focussing on the points of agreement which are the essential components of every religion.

Interaction with other nations

India has always been active in the spiritual plane. This choice was made long ago, and spirituality is the *life-centre* of the Indian race. Neither politics, nor military power, nor commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius constitutes the backbone of India. And it is incumbent upon every Indian to cultivate the treasures of spirituality, and then disseminate it to other nations, for, that constitutes the *mission* of the race. Just

as it is given to the Brahmins to cultivate knowledge only with an eye to distributing it to the other classes thereby elevating them to Brahminhood, even so, as a nation, India is to cultivate spiritual values and disseminate them for ensuring the stability of other nations. This role India had played in the past.

...whenever either by mighty conquest or by commercial supremacy different parts of the world have been kneaded into one whole race and bequests have been made from one corner to the other, each nation, as it were, poured forth its own quota, either political, social, or spiritual. India's contribution to the sum total of human knowledge has been spirituality, philosophy. These she contributed even long before the rising of the Persian Empire; the second time was during the Persian Empire; for the third time during the ascendancy of the Greeks; and now for the fourth time during the ascendancy of the English, she is going to fulfil the same destiny once more.²⁰

However, Indians stopped going out of the country and hence did not fulfil the mission of the race. She also had only to lose thereby since she, by her aloofness, became unaware of the progress made by the other nations in various fields. It is the lack of a programme of exchange between India and other countries—countries, that depended on her, and upon whom she also depended in no small measure— which made it trivial whether India lived or not.

Time and again Swamiji reminded that Indians ought to visit other countries, especially Japan, and study the progress made by them. It will then be possible for Indians to really assess how far other countries had

19. CW, vol. 7, p. 28.

20. CW, vol. 3, p. 171.

progressed on account of their faith in themselves, meaning their muscles and intellect, while we Indians, lacking faith in our divine nature and the inherent potential to manifest every form of perfection, had lagged behind. It will enable us to see the organizing capacity in people of other nations, a faculty well nigh absent in us. It may also enable us to shake off jealousy, a trait we have obtained as a legacy from a thousand years of oppression and tyranny.

Immortal India

Studying this phenomenon in the realm of the rise and fall in the *spiritual life* of every nation, Swamiji remarks,

...In every nation's spiritual life, there is a fall as well as a rise. The nation goes down, and everything seems to go to pieces. Then, again, it gains strength, rises; a huge wave comes, sometimes a tidal wave—and always on the topmost crest of the wave is a shining soul, the Messenger..... He puts forth his tremendous power upon society; and society makes him what he is. These are the great world-thinkers. These are the Prophets of the world, the Messengers of life, the Incarnations of God.²¹

The advent of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda was to fulfil a divine mission. As to how this came about is now a part of

history. The conquest of India by the British furnished fresh modes of connecting nations with the borders of India, and the religious findings of India's sages and seers flowed along these freshly established channels, through Swami Vivekananda. This resulted in the spiritual conquest of the West by India. The impact of the acceptance of the message of Vedanta by the scientific-minded West did much good. It awoke the Indians from their deep slumber, on the one hand giving them back their faith in their national heritage, and on the other, raised India in the estimation of the West. This awakening of the nation was a prelude to India's regaining her independence, and the goodwill generated in the West provided a means for studies on comparative religions and created opportunities for a programme of exchange between the West and India, the West now becoming conscious of the fact that the crying need of India was not religion but the gift of science and technology. It gained for India the sympathy of many westerners who laid down even their lives in the service of the downtrodden masses of India. As for the people of the West, the initial charm of material comforts and luxury having vanished, Vedanta entered into their very being in a sublime way and began to influence their national outlook. They truly understood the value of India's gift of spirituality to the world, for, they had to quench the fire of materialism that had engulfed them. □

21. CW, vol. 4, p. 120.

Just as the threads are subtler than the cloth, and the fibres of the threads subtler than the threads themselves, even so, where this progress from the subtle to the subtler stops, there do we confront the Inner Ruler.

—Pancadaśi, 166

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the December 1996 issue)

प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपा
अष्टादशोक्तमवरं येषु कर्म।
एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिनन्दन्ति मूढा
जरामृत्युं ते पुनरेवापि यन्ति॥

*Plavā hy-ete adṛdhā yajña-rūpā
aṣṭādaśoktam-avarāṁ yeṣu karma;
Etacchreyo ye'bhinandanti mūdhā
jarā-mṛtyuṁ te punar-
evāpi yanti. (Lii.7.)*

Unsafe boats, however, are these sacrificial forms, perishable because of the fragility of the eighteen constituents of a sacrifice (viz. the sixteen *rtviks*, i.e. priests, and the sacrificer and his wife) on which the lower, inferior, work rests. Therefore, fools (or ignorant people) who take delight in them, thinking, 'These are beneficial', again undergo old age and death.

This *mantra* is very revealing. It is a part of the *Upaniṣad* and not of any commentary. The teacher says here that, if you have decided to be a *karma-kāṇḍi* and enjoy the fruits of your work, suit yourself. You will indisputably enjoy the fruits of your *adṛṣṭa* in heaven. But do not be under the illusion that heavenly existence is everlasting. As rational beings, we know from commonsense that whatever is generated or created at some time and under certain circumstances by our actions, also disintegrates in time. So it is said, 'Kālah jagata bhakṣakah, Time is the devourer of the world', and 'Time is the victor'.

If we are *Yajamānas* and have worked perfectly according to the scriptural injunctions, we do get rid of the base, petty worldly desires, and cleanse our hearts. The *adṛṣṭa* created does enable the *karma-kāṇḍi* to go to heaven after his death. But we now ask, 'Can that heaven and its bliss be eternal?' How can that be eternal which is generated in time? When we understand this, we are sure to question whether the result is or is not commensurate with our life-long labour with *karma*. The answer we get is, 'No'. Our pragmatic sense says, a time will come when the *adṛṣṭa* will exhaust itself. As the *Gītā* says, 'Kṣīṇe puṇye martya lokam viśanti: after enjoying in heaven the results of good deeds, when the result or effect is dissipated those persons will come back to the mortal world.'

That is what the *ṛṣi* himself says: The fruits of rituals are *plavā*, transient; they will be destroyed after a time. So this idea is not of the later philosophical school only. Even in this *Upaniṣad* the impermanence of the rewards of rituals is recognized. *Plava* also means a barge or raft which takes one to the other shore of a river. The *mantra* says that the barge-like rituals which people take the help of to cross the river of worldly sorrows etc. are unsafe, unreliable, *adṛdhāḥ*. So *karma-kāṇḍa* is not *parā* or supreme, but *avarāṁ*, lesser, inferior, because its reward, goal, is not supreme. That is, it is *śaḍ-bhāva-vikārī*: it changes in six ways—*jāyate, asti, vardhate, vipariṇamate, apakṣīyate, vinaśyati*. The axiomatic truth about the world is that everything in it is made of the five elements and, however long it lasts, it will pass through the six-fold changes of birth etc.: *Jāyate*, it is born,

it manifests itself; *asti*, it exists; *vardhate*, grows; *vipariṇamate*, keeps changing; *apakṣīyate*, slowly withers away; *vinaśyati*, disintegrates. It arises from the *pañcabhūtas*, the five elements, and goes back to it.

Thus the *karmaphala* (fruits of action) is also not eternal. Why and where has the *karma-kāṇḍi* gone wrong? The answer is this: He has failed to see that the factors that create his *karmaphala* are themselves ephemeral. Let us see how this is so. The *karma* performed has eighteen constituents (*aṣṭādaśa*)—during a fire-sacrifice, each of the four Vedas requires four persons to recite portions from it and offer oblations, so there are sixteen *ṛtviks*, or *purohīts* (priests); the remaining two constituents are the husband and the wife who perform the sacrifice. This type of *karma* is *avara*, inferior, and not *vara*, superior.

All this time we were thinking that according to the teaching of the scriptures, performance of ritualistic duties will lead us to heaven, but now we see that *karma* has a built-in quality of disintegration in time. The *karma-kāṇḍi* is now told that what he has so far believed in is partially true and partially untrue. The fact is, eternity cannot be created in time out of limited resources. Following the disciplines of *karma-kāṇḍa* is a good way of life but not the supreme way. A person who has been told by the earlier two *mantras* to take to *karma-kāṇḍa* is now told that if he continues in *karma-kāṇḍa*, then he is a *mūḍha*, confused, immature, irrational person, one who is carried away by emotions, desire and egoism. Because, according to the *Upaniṣad*, *karma* is *adr̥ḍha*, fragile. Still, if a person thinks of the *avaram* as *śreyah*, the good and desirable goal of life, then he is dull-witted, (*mūḍhaḥ*). He is not totally wrong but is an *avivekī*, one who is not using the exclusive human power to discriminate between the good and the pleasurable. He thinks that this *yajña-rūpa avara-karma* is *parama-śreyah*, the

best possible way of life. The *Upaniṣad* says that, after starting a journey with conviction, one should not stop half way, but proceed to its logical conclusion, to discover truth about happiness and the best way of life. His thinking that *karma-kāṇḍa* is the be-all and end-all of life shows that he has stopped using his faculty of reasoning. Such a person gets caught in the endless cycle of life and death and suffering. He will again and again be born, live for a period, and suffer the tortures of old age and death, though he started his journey with the aim of finding a way out of this suffering!

So, after telling the *what*, *how* and *why* of *karma-kāṇḍa*, the end result and its duration, the wise teacher now discloses that it is not the highest goal. He who thinks it the best way of life and the giver of the best result is quite ignorant. Though *karma-kāṇḍa* and its result are eulogized and described in some detail, yet the *Upaniṣad* becomes self-critical. The very same *ṛṣi* who had experienced the usefulness of the sacrifices does not stop with them, but goes on inquiring and analysing it further till he sees where lies the ultimate truth. Having gone through the whole spectrum of activities to repay one's debt to society and others, and also having attained to the highest truth, the teacher shares all his wisdom with others without reservation.

So the suggestion is that there is a better way to utilize one's life to get an eternal return. The *Upaniṣad* is leading us to that by stimulating our thinking. This *mantra* ends by making the student a little unsure by questioning the *karma-kāṇḍa* way of life and prompting him to find out some other ways and means to utilize his life to derive eternal bliss.

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः

स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः।

जङ्गन्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढा
अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः॥

*Avidyāyām antare vartamaānāḥ
svayam dhīrāḥ paṇḍitaḥ manyamānāḥ;
Janghanyamānāḥ pariyanti mūḍā
andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ.*
(I.ii.8.)

Those remaining within the domain of ignorance, who consider themselves learned, those fools, being buffeted very much, go around deluded, like blind men led by one who is himself blind.

The teacher proceeds to warn us against the pitfalls of desiring worldly or heavenly joy, with a view to making us strive for spiritual advancement. A *mūḍhaḥ* or an *avivekī* person, who is limited by his lack of discrimination, not only thinks that *yajña-karma* is the best, but also wants others to believe so. The *karma-kāṇḍi* has stopped short of the final truth, and so, confined within the limits of this *avidyā* (lack of wisdom), he thinks himself to be a *dhīraḥ*, and a pundita, a learned person and a knower of the Self. *Paṇḍā* means knowledge of the Atman, and a person who possesses that knowledge or experience of the Atman is called a pundita.¹ But one who is suffering from *avidyā*, if he thinks he is a pundita, that he has known the truth in its totality, he is sure to stumble.

Janghanyamānāḥ means lurching, blundering about—like a person in a room moving in utter darkness knocking his head now and again against obstructions, unable to see where the exit door is. The state of indiscriminate persons is like that of the blind leading the blind; not only do they ruin themselves by striking their heads against

objects they cannot see, but they draw others also to follow them. They are themselves deluded into believing that they have attained whatever is worthy; further, thinking too much of themselves, they lead astray many others also along the inferior path. Thus the teacher, who first praised the end result of the *karma-kāṇḍi*, now truthfully describes where they had gone wrong, unable to see clearly that the end they imagined to be permanent was really temporal. This is a stern warning to all not to nourish such a notion.

The teacher is aiming at the whole truth, and so cannot adopt a compromising language to please people by hiding from them the unpalatable truth—that the *karma-kāṇḍi* stops his own process of evolution, whereas the *Upaniṣads* say,—‘*caraiveti, caraiveti, go forward, go forward*’, do not call a halt till the ultimate truth, the Oneness of the universe, dawns. This *caraiveti* is indirectly suggested here.

In a parable of Sri Ramakrishna, a woodcutter’s livelihood consisted in felling trees in a forest, and selling the wood. He had a few trees at the edge of the forest, not far from his hut, and he was satisfied with cutting this inferior fuel-wood and selling it. One day a *brahmachari* told him to go forward into the forest. The wood cutter gave that advice a try the very next day, went deeper into the forest and found very good timber suitable for making furniture. So he started making more money by selling the furniture-wood. A few days later, he again thought that he had not been asked to stop here but go forward. So he went ahead and found a still better quality of timber. He was continually impelled by this guiding instruction to go further on, so much so, he came successively to a forest of sandalwood, a silver mine, a gold mine, and ultimately, a diamond mine. Thus he became very rich. This parable implies that if one continues in

1. ‘*Paṇḍā ātma-viśayakam jñānam; tad-asya asti iti saḥ paṇḍitaḥ.*’

one's process of evolution with conscious effort and will, one accelerates its normal pace. One creates a revolution within oneself. So, we should not stop midway in the process of our spiritual evolution.

अविद्यायां बहुधा वर्तमाना

वयं कृतार्था इत्यभिमन्यन्ति बालाः।

यत्कर्मिणो न प्रवेदयन्ति रागात्

तेनाऽऽतुराः क्षीणलोकाश्च्यवन्ते॥

Avidyāyām bahudhā vartamānā

vayaṁ kṛtārthā ity-abhimanyanti bālāḥ;

Yat-karmiṇo na pravedayanti rāgāt

tenā'aturāḥ kṣīṇalokāś-cyavante. (I.ii.9.)

Living in ignorance in diverse ways, the unenlightened think, 'We have reached our highest objective.' Since the performers of karma do not understand (the truth) because of passion (rāga), therefore, they become wretched or afflicted with sorrow and are deprived of their worlds (heaven) on the exhaustion of the results of karma.

This *mantra* also speaks in the same vein. Here it is said that the Ritualists are in the grip of manifold thoughts born of ignorance, and are totally confused. Not being enlightened, that is, not having reached the goal of *parā-vidyā* or *jñāna*, their ego is strong. So, like immature children, they somehow delude themselves thinking that they have reached the goal. So foolish are they that they do not even realize that they are fools. They sit tight holding on to their convictions and refuse to admit the limitations of their goal. They even proclaim, 'We have accomplished our aim, we are *kṛtārthāḥ*, persons who have attained what is worthy of being attained.' They congratulate themselves on their achievement, and this is a great tragedy for any man. They are really like immature children in spiritual life. The worst part is that, out of sheer egoism, they do not stop to

ask, 'Am I heading in the right direction?'

Since their whole attention is diverted to attainment of fruits of action (*phala-prāpti*), such people think that they are going to live in the heaven with the gods; so what could be better than that? This very attitude closes the door to further development. They become attached to the desire to enjoy the so-called comforts and pleasures of life in heaven; they become helpless victims of their own thinking. For, having enjoyed the pleasures of heaven, their good *karmas* are soon exhausted and they take birth repeatedly in this world of suffering in various forms.

The wise teacher knows that these people will not go to the logical end of their quest for truth, for they refuse to exert themselves further. So this *mantra* gives importance to and clarifies the misconceptions and pitfalls which await the Ritualists in their search for fulfilment. The *karma-kāṇḍi*, who gets attached to the hope of enjoying the promised pleasures in heaven, stops growing further.

People who are content merely to enjoy the fruits of good actions, have to lead a good life by submitting to the rigours prescribed, without letting their moods affect their actions. Self-discipline by will-power leads to the desired goal though inferior, and a time comes when one is convinced that the investment of one's time and energy in *karma* does not give commensurate results. Further, it is highlighted that one should not ignore the other higher thoughts and impulses that may arise in the course of evolution of one's personality. That is why the teacher goes into the subject at such length, devoting three *mantras* to impress upon us that *caraiveti, caraiveti* is the motto of life till we attain the ultimate superior goal.

(to be continued)

The Glory of Devotion

Once upon a time, while the Pāṇḍavas were in exile, sage Durvāsa came to king Duryodhana's court. The king courteously welcomed him and gave him a sumptuous feast; and so greatly pleased was the sage with the welcome and the dinner, that he offered to grant his royal host any boon he might ask. The wicked king Duryodhana's one main desire at all times was to do all the mischief in his power to the Pāṇḍavas. He had contrived to drive them away into the forest in exile, and yet was not satisfied, as he learnt that they were leading a very happy life, even in the forest, doing great deeds and conversing with great rishis. All this very much roused his envy, and now that a new opportunity presented itself for doing harm, he addressed his guest and said, 'O great sage, the great king Yudhiṣṭira is the eldest and the best of our race; he is now living in the forest with his brothers. Do thou, therefore, once become the guest of that illustrious one, even as thou hast been mine. Do thou go unto them with all thy disciples and that, at a time when that beautiful and excellent lady, the celebrated princess of Pāṇchāla, after having regaled with food the Brahmins, her husband and herself, may lie down to rest.' In asking for this boon, Duryodhana's motive was, that Durvāsa and his numerous disciples will be too heavy a burden on the Pāṇḍavas, especially if they go at a late hour and being unable to feed them, the latter will be cursed by the wrathful rishi. The boon was granted and accordingly the rishi and his ten thousand disciples repaired to the forest and presented themselves before the Pāṇḍavas at a late hour. Yudhiṣṭira, suspecting nothing, advanced with his brothers towards the sage, gave him and his disciples a fit and

heartily welcome and said, 'Return quick, O adorable sage, after performing thy daily ablutions and observances.' And that sage, not knowing, how the king would be able to provide a feast for him and his disciples, proceeded with the latter to a neighbouring river to perform their ablutions. Meanwhile, the excellent princess Draupadi, devoted to her husbands, was in great anxiety about the food to be provided for the rishis. And, when after much anxious thought, she came to the conclusion that means there were none for providing a dinner, she inwardly prayed to Krishna, the protector of the humble. 'Krishna,' she said, 'O, Krishna of mighty arms, O son of Devakī, whose power is inexhaustible, O Vāsudeva, O Lord of the universe, who drivest away the difficulties of those that bow down to Thee, Thou art the soul, the creator, and the destroyer of the universe! Thou, O Lord art inexhaustible and the saviour of the afflicted! Thou art the preserver of the universe and the spring of all our mental perceptions. O supreme and infinite Being, O giver of all good, be thou the refuge of the helpless! I seek Thy protection! O God, Thou art ever kindly disposed towards those that take refuge in Thee! Do thou cherish me with Thy kindness. Thou art the supreme light and essence of the Universe. They call Thee the Supreme germ and the depositary of all treasures! Under Thy protection, O Lord of the gods, all evils lose their terror. Thou didst protect me before, on several occasions, do Thou extricate me now from this difficulty!'

The great sovereign God and Lord of the earth, of mysterious movements, the Lord Keśava, thus adored by Draupadi, and perceiving her difficulty, instantly appeared

before her. Beholding Vāsudeva, Draupadi bowed down to him in great joy and informed him of the untimely arrival of the rishis. But Krishna said unto her, 'I am very much afflicted with hunger, do thou give me some food without delay from the Akṣaya-pātra¹ given by the sun deity and then we may talk of those things.' Hearing this Draupadi got greatly perplexed, for she had no food to give him and said, 'That vessel remains full till I finish my meals, but as I have already taken my meal today there is no food in it now.' Then the lotus-eyed and adorable Krishna said unto Draupadi, 'This is not time for jest, go thou quickly, bring the vessel and show it to me. I am very much distressed with hunger.' 'There is nothing the vessel, Krishna,' said Draupadi, 'I shall cook a meal for thee in no time. Do thou wait a few seconds. I am very sorry that....' 'I cannot wait,' interrupted Krishna. 'I am extremely hungry. Bring thou that vessel, let me see if there is anything in it.' 'I assure thee the vessel is empty: there is nothing in it,' said Draupadi, bringing the vessel which Krishna quickly snatched from her hand, and looking into it, he said, 'Do thou look her! There is a particle of rice and vegetable; thou wantedst to deceive me!' 'Certainly not,' exclaimed Draupadi, 'It is I who cleaned the vessel and kept it in the usual place. I cannot really say how that little bit of rice came to be there.' 'No matter if thou canst not say,' said Krishna, 'my hunger will be satisfied all the same. This little bit of rice from this vessel is more than enough for me. May this please God Hari, the Soul of the Universe, and may that God, who partaketh at sacrifices, be satisfied with this!' and so saying he swallowed that little bit. 'I suspect thou art at some new trick,' said Draupadi. 'Thy hunger must have been a very wonderful one to be appeased by half a grain of rice. 'This is how you all mistake me,' replied Krishna. 'No matter if thou dost not believe me, thou wert talking to me of some rishis come for dinner. Where are they?' 'They are

at the river performing their ablutions. I do not know how to provide for them,' said Draupadi.

Krishna: 'Let them come. Send for them.'

Draupadi: 'And if they come, what shall we do? I have nothing to feed them with.'

Krishna: 'We shall chide them for having come at an untimely hour, tell them to wait till tomorrow and teach them to be more careful about their dinners and suppers in future.'

'That is hospitality itself,' remarked Draupadi.

'Learning is more valuable than eating,' said Krishna, 'and so let them, at least by fasting today, learn to be more careful in future; as for teaching them that lesson, leave that to me.' So saying he called Bhīmasena, and said, 'Do thou go and speedily invite the rishis to dinner.'

Meanwhile, those rishis while bathing and performing their ablutions, suddenly felt their stomachs becoming full. Indeed, they became so full as to render even breathing difficult. The surprise of the rishis knew no bounds and they stared at one another being hardly able to speak, and turning towards their common guru Durvāsa, with great effect said, 'Having bade the king to have our meals ready, we have come here for bathing. But how, O holy sage, can we eat anything now, for our stomachs seem full to the throat—we do not know how. The repast has been uselessly prepared for us. What is the best thing to be done now?' Durvāsa replied, 'Never before in my life was my belly so full; I do not know by what strange cause this has happened. If Yudhiṣṭira comes and invites us as he certainly will in a short time, what shall we do? By

wasting his repast, we will be doing a great harm to that royal sage. The Pāṇḍavas may get angry with us; I know the royal sage Yudhiṣṭira to be possessed of great ascetic power. Ye Brahmins, I am afraid of men who are devoted to Hari! The high-souled Pāṇḍavas are all religious men, learned, warlike, diligent in ascetic austerities and religious observances, devoted to Vāśudeva, and always observant of rules of good conduct. If provoked, they can consume us with their wrath, as fire doth a bale of cotton. Therefore, ye disciples, shall we all run away quickly without seeing them?’

‘O adorable sage,’ they replied, ‘we can hardly rise up; how then can we run? We find it difficult even to walk, nay even to breathe. We are “full to the neck”; save us, O master, from this misery.’ Durvāsa did not know what to do, he regretted that he foolishly yielded to Duryodhana to use him for his own wicked purposes; he feared that his punishment had already begun and was frightened that further harm might come. While he was in this miserable plight, there appeared Bhīmasena and said unto him, ‘Come, O sage, with all thy disciples, for my brothers, Draupadi and Krishna are waiting to receive thee.’ At the very mention of Krishna’s name, poor Durvāsa trembled from head to foot; his fears gathered new strength and he inwardly felt greatly ashamed to face the Pāṇḍavas, but there was no helping it. So, he addressed his disciples and said, ‘Rise ye forth, exert all your might and let us walk on to the abode of the Pāṇḍavas, for in sooth, there is no helping it.’ It was a rather comic sight to see these ‘pot-bellied’ Brahmins, ‘swollen up to the neck’ (as the Indian saying goes), toiling onward with feet too weak to bear the weight on them, breathing like mountain-snakes and sweating in rivulets all over the body. Bhīmasena looked at their condition and learnt from them what the matter was.

With no small difficulty, they reached the abode of the Pāṇḍavas and were duly welcomed by Yudhiṣṭira and the rest. Krishna showed special attention to Durvāsa, which only made him more miserable than before. The face of the poor rishi was covered with shame, he bowed to Krishna, and with his head hung down or rather, his eyes hung down, as he could not bend his head, said, ‘Lord, Thou shouldst forgive me for my foolishness. I hastily placed myself under the power of a wicked man but my only consolation is that no harm has been done to the Pāṇḍavas, who have always been piously devoted to Thee.’ And then he related in detail the whole story and how he and his disciples had already been punished. ‘I see, O cunning Krishna,’ exclaimed Draupadi, ‘I now see why Thou wert so hungry for half a grain of rice. By your taking in that little bit of rice, all these rishis have got satisfied. What example there could be, more plain than this, to show that Thou art in all the world as oil in sesame-seed, as brightness in the diamond, as smell in the flower. All praise and glory to Thee, Who art our refuge, our master, our friend, our relative, our guide, and our teacher. No fear can ever come to the followers of Hari, no danger to the worshippers of the lotus-eyed Krishna.’

Needless to add that the rishis were forgiven and all rejoiced at the event and sang the glory of Krishna. □

—Adapted from the Mahābhārata

There is no comparison between a learned man and a king; for, the king is respected only in his kingdom, the learned is worshipped everywhere.

—Cāṇakyaśloka, 1

A Visit by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi

The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri H.D. Deva Gowda, paid a short visit on the 12th October 1996 to the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, on invitation to see the Permanent Exhibition on Swami Vivekananda in the Ashrama premises. While viewing the photograph of the ancestral home of Swami Vivekananda put up in the Exhibition, it was pointed out to him that more than a hundred years having gone by since the birth of the illustrious patriot-prophet of India, it was high time steps were taken to preserve his ancestral home and also to erect a suitable memorial building in Calcutta where he was born. The 'demand' referred to in the marginally edited version of Shri Gowda's brief speech reproduced below is a request for help and patronage from the Hon'ble Prime Minister to the Ramakrishna Mission to realize this aim.

At the outset I am grateful to you for giving me today this opportunity to see some of the collections in the Exhibition on Swami Vivekananda and have darshan of this holy place.

I do not want to make a long speech in this connection. Regarding one of the demands which your good self has placed before the Government of India, I would like to say sincerely that the demand is going to be considered favourably.

I can say only one word in this connection. Today the atmosphere of the whole country is polluted and our country is again at a cross-roads. If we try to practise in our day-to-day life at least one per cent of the message of our great saints—what they have shown to the society through their lives and what they have taught us through their immortal words—, we can get some relief for our own selves and the country also can be bailed out. I do not want to attribute our sorry state of affairs to any set of individuals or any set of organizations. It is undeniably true that the whole atmosphere in different strata of society is very much spoilt. Who is responsible and who is not, is not the issue to be debated at this moment. How effectively and how soon we can go back to the good old days is what matters. This country

has been blessed by the holy sons of the soil and by many philosophers. Their lives and message should be the guideline to revive our faith in our country's ancient heritage and values, values that have been forgotten and neglected. In such a circumstance, let us take the pledge: Whatever is within my capacity in the matter of discharging my duties and improving the society, that I will do. I will do no damage to the society.

It is my good fortune to visit this centre today and have the darshan of this holy place as also see some of the collections preserved in the Exhibition depicting what Swamiji had done in the past, not only for India but also for the whole world. This exhibition will be an asset to our future generation.

With these few words, I once again offer my pranams to you. I am very grateful to you for your inviting me to visit this place. What little contribution I can make from the side of the Government of India, not as my individual contribution, that I shall do. The Government of India will come to your aid and extend its full cooperation to complete the work.

Thank you very much once again. □

Sanskrit in Contemporary Society

DR. A. SADANANDAN

Though Sanskrit is not the spoken language in today's world, yet the language has its own charm. Great thinkers have recognized this and felt the unique appeal exerted by Sanskrit as a medium of expression per se and as the vehicle of expression of many texts with a soul-captivating message relevant to man for all time. Dr. A. Sadanandan, Vice President of the Bhāratī Saṁskṛta Vidyā Niketanam, Bombay, highlights the need for the cultivation of Sanskritic studies to ensure both the healthy growth of other daughter languages and the protection of humanity by ensuring a life of harmony free from worldly strain.

It is widely acknowledged that Sanskrit literature is the repository of a wide range of knowledge. The *Mahabharata* itself being a compendium of many branches of knowledge, it is said:

यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र, यत्रेहास्ति न तत् क्वचित्॥

Only that which is already here [in the Mahabharata] is found elsewhere; that which is not here, is not found anywhere else.

There is no work like the *Bhagavad-Gita* in world literature which helps man to overcome frustration and solve the many dilemma one faces, especially of what one ought to do and what one ought to refrain from under a given circumstance. Speaking of the discipline of Yoga, the *Bhagavad-Gita* says: स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्। 'Even a little of this righteous law delivers one from great peril.' The *Gita* advises that one should perform one's duty unmindful of personal inconveniences and says: स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः। 'Better is death while performing one's own duty; for, to follow the duty of another is perilous.'

Listening to an ancient song like the *Bhagavad-Gita*—even if you do not understand, even if you do not know the Sanskrit language—, you feel a great

stillness growing within you.

भाषासु मधुरा मुख्या श्रेष्ठा गीर्वाणभारती।

Among languages, the most magnificent and the most melodious is Sanskrit.

This is the unequivocal conclusion of great scholars like Max Müller.

Great men of the recent past like Lokamanya Tilak, Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Mahatma Gandhi were nurtured and sustained by the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which played a vital role in giving shape and fulfilment to their mission in life. Acharya Vinoba Bhave who has the distinction of translating the Holi Koran into English says, 'I have studied a good many languages and literature of the world. But no language of the world other than Sanskrit declares to man तत् त्वम् असि 'Thou art That'. This spiritual lore is our strength. Herein lies the distinctive glory of India. India is **the best country in the world.**'

Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan in his Report of the University Education Commission observed,

Sanskrit as a language is an instrument of the greatest value in the deline-

ation of all thought processes and the most profound ratiocination of all ideas which are deep and subtle, of all forms of aesthetic and emotional perception, and above all, of the most profound and ultimate forms of spiritual intuition and understanding. It is agreed on all hands that the study of Sanskrit enables us to draw freely upon our traditions which can lead to the new world outlook of modern man. Further it helps to keep pace with the rapid social change, advances in modern science and technology and the process of modernization, at the same time inculcating the right type of social, moral and spiritual values through self-discipline.

Our veteran Jurist, Nani Palkhivāla, while delivering a University Convocation address said,

If we lose our sensitivity towards the quality of life, it can mean that while our knowledge increases, our ignorance does not diminish.

Palkhivala observed further,

What our old sages said about the nature of ultimate Reality seems to coincide with what our greatest scientists of today think regarding the baffling nature of matter. If you have in parallel columns some quotations from ancient classics and from the findings of modern science, you will be amazed at their correspondence. Such is our marvellous heritage, and yet we turn so seldom to it, being absorbed in passing trivialities.

A renowned scientist, once while addressing a distinguished gathering said that a tiny book in Sanskrit known as *Tarka-Saṅgraha* which he read after obtaining his doctorate in Physics contained more of the fundamental principles and concepts of Physics

than he had studied through University courses.

Emerson who had studied the literature of a dozen countries observed that the writings of ancient India, with special reference to the Upanishads, represent the summit of human thought. The knowledge of our sages was intuitive. The other type of knowledge acquired from teachers and from books, is repetitive, imitative and derivative.

Einstein compared one with specialized knowledge and yet devoid of the sense of moral good to a well-trained dog; such a one was certainly not a harmoniously developed person.

Swami Vivekananda extolled the common sense of our grandmothers—in the conventional sense unlettered, yet educated through the influence of stories from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Panchatantra*, etc.

Sanskrit language is variously referred to as *Devavāṇī*, *Amaravāṇī*, *Gīrvāṇavāṇī*, *Sura-bhārati*, *Amarabhārati* etc. each expression connoting its inherent vitality, versatility and greatness. The script in which Sanskrit texts are written is called *Devanāgarī*. The uniqueness of Sanskrit language is that every syllable of it pulsates with divinity. Every syllable is potent in certain measure to kindle the cosmic energy. Pronunciation of words, stanzas and sentences with measured intonation regulates one's breathing and harmonizes one's entire being with the subtle elements in the cosmic region. Measured utterances such as 'Om, Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ' generate and release cosmic vibrations conducive to expansion of inner consciousness and an experience of inner serenity. The great commentator, Patañjali, extols the study of this perfected language as *Ekaḥ śabdaḥ samyagjñātaḥ śāstrānivitāḥ su-*

prayuktah svarge loke kāmadhugbhavati, even a word of the scriptural texts, properly understood and used well, is conducive to gratifying of desires and reaching fulfilment.

A serious student of Sanskrit who succeeds in mastering the language with attendant inherent personality development, is compared to a monarch: महाभाष्यं वा पठनीयम्। महाराज्यं वा शासनीयम्। The student is to be conceived as a monarch without any territorial limitation, for, *Svadeśe pūjyate rājā, vidvān sarvatra pūjyate*, 'A king is respected in his own kingdom, whereas the learned is respected everywhere.'

The self-confidence and magnetic personality of a learned man is vividly represented in *Panchatantra*, a popular work, which has been translated into different languages on account of the invaluable advice it enshrines such as: 'United we stand, divided we fall.' The incident starts with a gloom of sorrow over a king whose three sons were hostile to education. The royal counsellors were summoned and their views sought. After due deliberation, it emerged that the task of converting the minds of the sons be entrusted to a learned and very competent pandit by name Vishnuserman. In return for converting his three sons from duds to men of wisdom and learning, the king offered a hundred land grants, *Śataśāsanena yojayiṣyāmi iti*. Vishnuserman replied, 'O King, I am not the man to sell good learning for any material gain. But I am pleased to avail of the opportunity to sport with the "Deity of Learning", *Sarasvatīvinodam kariṣyāmi*. Hence I undertake this assignment with a lion's roar, *śrūyatām me simhanādaḥ*. If I fail to render your sons, in six month's time, incomparable masters of the art of intelligent living, then His Majesty is at liberty to show me His Majesty's bare bottom, *Tava putrān nayaśāstram prati ananyasadrśān na kariṣyāmi, tato nārhati devo*

devamārgam saṁdarśayitum. The king was highly pleased with the uncommon but self-assuring assertion of the Pandit. Vishnuserman took the boys in his care, and made them learn five books composed by him, namely, *Mitrabhedam* (Loss of Friends), *Mitrasaṁprāptiḥ* (The Winning of Friends), *Kākolūkiyam* (Crows and Owls), *Labdha-praṇāśam* (Loss of Gains), and *Aparokṣita-kārakam* (Ill-conceived Action).

True to the undertaking, at the end of six months the boys were restored, highly accomplished in the art of intelligent living. The credit of this marvel of achievement goes to *Devavāṇī*, the Sanskrit language, and the incomparable treasure of knowledge expressed through it. It proves the truth of the old saying,

अमन्त्रमक्षरं नास्ति नास्ति मूलमनौषधम्।

अयोग्यः पुरुषो नास्ति योजकस्तत्र दुर्लभः॥

There is no letter of the alphabet which does not have the potency of a mantra, incantation. There is no root which does not have some medicinal property. There is no one who is totally useless. What is difficult to come by is someone with the capacity and vigour to make use of them appropriately.

If the flow of Sanskrit is arrested, other languages, its branches, must perish for want of feeding. It is for this reason, perhaps, the great poet and seer, Rabindra Nath Tagore, desired that no professor should be in charge of any language in Shantiniketan unless he is well grounded in Sanskrit.

With the galloping speed of scientific and technological advancement, the lifestyle of the people is also undergoing change rapidly. With the advent of TV and easily procurable devices for entertainment, literate people have very little time and inclination to read classical works for intellectual stimulation and scriptural texts for

gaining spiritual insight. As we grow richer and richer in the knowledge of science and technology, we, owing to negligence, become poorer and poorer in wisdom, contemplation and gentleness. Technical and profession skills are imparted and acquired without the lubricating ingredient of ancient wisdom.

In our society which is keyed to material progress, the importance of the study of Sanskrit is immense and profound. The study of Sanskrit literature, the Upanishads, in particular, will provide a clear direction and goal in our lives. One who keeps company of the great heritage contained in the Sanskrit literature and the scriptures will be able to carve out a life of harmony—a life of intense activity coupled with deep contemplation, a life lived in the finite and yet attuned to the infinite, a life bound in time and yet reaching out to eternity. The study of the Upanishads will dispel all doubts and solve all riddles encountered in nature, *chinna-samśayāḥ bhaveyuh*.

almost all the universities in recent days. For the study of structure and dialectical variation of any language, Sanskrit grammar and its analytical logic is taken as the model and guide.

With the introduction of computers, it has been proved that the algebraic derivative logic of Sanskrit grammar is so fool-proof that many new techniques can be developed for manipulating knowledge, inference and deduction. Thus with the use of relevant software package, the teaching and learning of Sanskrit and various treatises through Audio-Visual and Distance Education Schemes have become extremely feasible.

Suffice to say that the study of Sanskrit, even to the extent of being able to read and understand simple original works like the *Bhagavad-Gita* and to recite correctly at least one of the Upanishads, is sufficient protection against the stress and strain which are a common phenomenon in modern society. □

Linguistics is a discipline introduced in

My creed—To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits, to love the truth, to be sincere, to utter honest words, to love liberty, to wage relentless war against slavery in all its forms, to love wife and child and friend, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful in art, in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be familiar with the mighty thoughts that genius has expressed, the noble deeds of all the world; to cultivate courage and cheerfulness, to make others happy, to fill the life with the splendour of generous acts, the warmth of loving words; to discard error, to destroy prejudice, to receive new truths with gladness, to cultivate hope, to see the calm beyond the storm, the dawn beyond the night, to do the best that can be done and then be resigned.

This is the religion of reason, the creed of science. This satisfies the brain and heart.

—Robert G. Ingersoll

Dhamma and Science

PROF. P.L. DHAR

For the modern rational man who is not willing to accept dhamma on authority, either of a religious leader or of a sacred book, Prof. P.L. Dhar presents dhamma as an applied science verifiable by personal experience. Though for the common man, scientific temper is synonymous with a belief in materialism, yet, the inter-convertibility between matter and energy, the wave-particle dual behaviour of fundamental particles, and the 'bio-dance' which means a continuous renewal of material components constituting any object in this universe, take us away from seeking a material entity as our 'individuality'. Investigations into the subtle mental plane is therefore necessary for gaining an understanding of the ultimate Reality. The quintessence of dhamma is vipassana, the scientific technique of concentration on one's own breath, which leads to purification of the mind, the cultivation of the art of living equanimously and transcending the sensory attractions. Pursuit of dhamma is essential, for, science without dhamma will result in man's extinction.

Inquisitiveness is one of the most fundamental characteristics of human beings. Right from birth, a child tries to know and understand the world around him. As the child grows up, it begins to understand the cause-effect relationship between various events—putting a switch down lights a bulb, putting an ice cube in a glass of soft drink cools it down, placing one's hand near fire heats it up... and we say, the child is learning, gaining knowledge. Science is essentially a systematization of all the observations that humanity has made of the external world with the help of senses.

As the child grows into a mature person and experiences the various vicissitudes of life, sooner or later, it begins to question: What is the purpose of all this—being born, studying, earning, rearing a family, getting old and finally dying? Why so much suffering—due to illness, old age, separation from the loved ones, association with the 'wicked'...? One begins to contemplate and understand his own true nature, the real cause of his suffering and the way out of it, and thus become wiser. *Dhamma* (Sanskrit

dharma) is essentially a systematization of all the wisdom gained by humanity. Viewed in this manner dhamma and science emerge as two complementary aspects of human endeavour. As the *Īśa-Upaniṣad* puts it: He who has both spiritual wisdom (dhamma) and secular knowledge (science) together, keeps death at bay through the latter and experiences immortality through the former.¹

Science (especially its applied version, i.e. technology) gives us the necessary 'know-how' to keep our body in good shape and the dhamma provides us with an understanding of the very purpose of our existence, the 'know-where-to'. Clearly, for the harmonious development of any society—nay, for the harmonious development of every individual, a proper integration of science and dhamma is extremely essential. This is especially crucial in modern times when the advances in science and technol-

1. P.L. Gaur and R.R. Gaur, *Science and Humanism—Towards a Unified World View* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1992), p. 128.

ogy have empowered man enormously and due to lack of the 'wisdom' of dhamma this advancement in science is leading only to increase of his sorrows...poisoning of land, air, water and human mind.

The term Dhamma literally means 'the natural law'. Dhamma is thus an exposition of the laws pertaining to the inner world of man, just as science deals with the laws applicable to the outer world. The difference between science and dhamma is thus only a difference in the domain of enquiry—just as there is difference between the domain of enquiry of various 'departments' of science like physics, chemistry and botany. Then why is there this general perception of irreconcilability of science with dhamma?

Many factors are responsible for this perception, the first and foremost being the erroneous understanding of both dhamma and science. Thus, today for most people, dhamma is synonymous with sectarian religions, with priestcraft, a mumbo-jumbo of words, elaborate rites, and rituals... which can become the cause of internecine conflicts between neighbours, even though they might have lived like brothers for generations... and above all with a stubborn resistance to any logical scrutiny of the 'religious beliefs'. No wonder the youth do not want to touch it even with a barge pole! Modern rational man who is not willing to accept anything on authority, be it the authority of a religious teacher or of a 'sacred book', is thus tempted to reject it all...even the eternal truths which he so badly needs to give direction to his life—thus 'throwing the baby along with the bathwater'. And this process is catalyzed by his 'scientific' temperament which is equated with crass materialism...for hasn't science got an explanation for every phenomenon on the basis of matter in motion under the influence of various forces? Thus anyone talking about the existence of reality beyond sensory perception is

usually dubbed as unscientific...an ignorant fool living in a world of his own fancies! In such a scenario the integration of science and dhamma is obviously impossible.

To change this situation there is clearly a need to present dhamma as a science, fol-

Secondly, we also need to understand whether materialism, a legacy of nineteenth century science, is still endorsed by modern science. Fortunately, the recent developments in science are questioning this traditional world view...

lowing the scientific method, shorn of all extraneous 'socio-political adjuncts' and metaphysical speculations. The scientific attitude demands '...induction from facts and not deduction from dogmas. We must face the facts and derive our conclusions from them and not start with the conclusion and then play with the facts.'² Secondly, we also need to understand whether materialism, a legacy of nineteenth century science, is still endorsed by modern science. Fortunately, the recent developments in science are questioning this traditional world view and a proper understanding of these developments can give a fillip to the process of integrating science and dhamma.

Dhamma as an Applied Science

The essence of scientific temper can be succinctly put in the words of J.A. Thomson³: 'The aim of science is to describe impersonal facts of experience in verifiable terms as exactly as possible, as simply as possible, and as completely as possible.'

2. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (Bombay: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p. 13.

3. J.A. Thomson, *Introduction to Science* (New York: Holt & Co., 1911), quoted in Ref. 6, p. 39.

Clearly if dhamma is presented as 'The Law' which can be experienced by all, and not by a select few; if the various propositions are presented as hypotheses, to be accepted only on verification by experience, albeit personal and subjective,⁴ and not on author-

profundity, but its practical utility and universal applicability are quite obvious. Viewed in this light, purifying the mind of its baser instincts is the quintessence of dhamma, since this would quite naturally lead to performance of wholesome deeds

Believe nothing merely because you have been told it or because it is tradition or because you yourself have imagined it. Do not believe which your teacher tells you merely out of respect for the teacher. But whatever after due examination and analysis you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings, that doctrine believe and cling to, and take it as your guide.

ity, and if these propositions are not irrational or illogical, dhamma becomes a rigorous science.

The teachings of Buddha, one of the greatest spiritual scientists, bear out this fact. His constant refrain to the disciples might as well have been the advice of a modern humane scientist to young students:

Believe nothing merely because you have been told it or because it is tradition or because you yourself have imagined it. Do not believe which your teacher tells you merely out of respect for the teacher. But whatever after due examination and analysis you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings, that doctrine believe and cling to, and take it as your guide.

The essence of dhamma, as put crisply by all the Enlightened Ones is: *The eschewing of all evil, the perfecting of good deeds, the purifying of one's mind*⁵—The simplicity of this enunciation, devoid of any esoteric metaphysical pronouncement, may sometimes conceal its

and development of an insight into the basic characteristics of life. And this process of purification is not a 'mystic knowledge' beyond the ken of ordinary people but a strictly scientific technique open to anybody who is willing to learn and verify it. *Vipassana*⁶: insight, clear seeing, intuitive cognition, is that quintessence of dhamma.

The process of purification of mind is analogous to cleaning the turbid water of a lake. Two approaches are possible: One could put an external precipitating agent like alum in the water to chemically force all the impurities to settle down to the bottom of the lake; or one could go inside the lake, identify each and every impurity and actually take them out. Clearly the effort involved in this second process would be much larger—and the process is bound to be messy too—but the advantages are quite obvious. In the former method, we are only suppressing the impurities to the bottom. But they are still very much there—a major storm churning up the lake would again make the water dirty—while, in the latter case, we would have actually eliminated them and the lake would remain clean so long as we do not add fresh impurities to it.

4. Due to the nature of enquiry, spiritual experience is personal; but it is not a private fact. It is predictable and verifiable in the personal experience of others.

5. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1950), verse 183.

6. *Vipasyanā* [Sanskrit].

The ancient masters recognized both these approaches for the suppression or elimination of the mental defilements⁷ as and when they arise—e.g. by listening to music, or having a drink, or chanting a holy name, or some lofty auto-suggestion, the intensity of these negative emotions abates quickly and we can get an immediate relief. However, the defilements are not actually eradicated, but only suppressed, and as modern psychology also agrees, these leave their impressions in deeper recesses—(the subconscious and unconscious layers) of the mind.

To remove these impurities of mind, it is necessary to identify them objectively, without letting them overpower us and provoke a reaction; and it turns out that this detached 'observation' of the mental-physical structure is sufficient to eliminate them! An incident from the life of Swami Vivekananda illustrates this point quite interestingly. Once Swamiji was walking on a road in Varanasi. Some monkeys probably took fancy to his flowing ochre robes and started howling and chasing him. As they approached closer, Swamiji began to run; but the faster he ran, the faster came the monkeys, and began to attack him. It seemed impossible to escape, but just then an old man observing the scene called out: 'Face the brute'. Swamiji turned and faced the monkeys and they fell back and finally fled.⁸

The impurities of the mind are just like these monkeys; and the only way to eradicate them is to 'face them squarely'—to observe them non-reactively. But then, how to observe these defilements? How does one

observe anger, for example, without actually getting overwhelmed by it?

The ancient masters who unravelled the complexities of body-mind phenomena with penetrating insight discovered that 'whatever arises in the mind is accompanied by sensation' (*sabbe dhamma vedana samosarana* [Pali]), and that all our reactions to various situations are in reality the reactions of our subconscious mind to the body sensations.⁹ Now, while it is very difficult to

...The ancient masters who unravelled the complexities of body-mind phenomena with penetrating insight discovered that 'whatever arises in the mind is accompanied by sensation'...and that all our reactions to various situations are in reality the reactions of our subconscious mind to the body sensations....

'observe' objectively the abstract emotions like anger or passion, one could comparatively easily train the mind to observe these sensations (which carry the signatures of these emotions) in a detached manner. The continuous practice of observing these bodily sensations objectively is the crux of *vipassana*. Slowly, but surely, it grinds out the deep mental grooves of 'life-long' habits, craving for the pleasant and avoiding the unpleasant, and ignoring neutral experiences, and gradually lifts the veil which obscures from us the real nature of all body-mind phenomena—impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and egolessness. To be able to 'observe' the sensations which keep on occurring continuously in various parts of the body, a minimum level of concentration of the mind is obviously essential so that one

7. such as anger, hatred, vengefulness, despair, regret, arrogance, greed, envy, lust, pride, etc.

8. *Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 1, p. 214.

9. William Hart, *The Art of Living* (Igatpuri [India]: Vipassana Research Institute, 1993), p. 148.

does not get easily distracted by the external and inner noises which are the hallmark of our modern life.

The training of increasing the concentration of mind can be done in a variety of ways. In *vipassana*, the object of concentration is one's own breath. This practice—called *anapana*, which literally means incoming and outgoing breath—involves bare observation of the normal natural respiration with a firm and steady attention free from any strain. Again, there is no mystery about this choice of breath as the object

...important objective is to purify the mind of its dross, it is not a mere detergent to wash the dirt off the mental linens, to be left behind in the washroom after use; but an attitude to life, a fragrance which naturally envelops the practitioner as he develops more and more insight into the fundamental traits of human existence.

of concentration; there are many sound reasons for this. Firstly, it is universally acceptable, being non-sectarian, and it is readily available at any time and place. Secondly, it is very intimately related to the mind and is a neutral object: no one has any craving or aversion for it. Focussing attention on such an object continuously for a long period of time is, of course, quite difficult given our present mental disposition which only seeks excitement through pleasant objects. But a systematic, persistent effort does make a dent in this stubborn habit and gives the mind a foretaste of the fruits of equableness...a natural feeling of peace and tranquillity accompanying sharpening of the mind. One could have chosen an object of concentration for which the meditator has some attraction or reverence. This would have made the task of concentration much easier because of the natural attraction for

the object, but would also strengthen the moral habit of 'craving' and thus take us away from the goal of complete purification of mind.

An obvious prerequisite for such a training is the scrupulous observance of basic moral precepts, viz. abstention from killing, stealing, false speech, sexual misconduct, and intoxicants—since their willful violation would cause violent mental agitation making it impossible to observe the mind-body complex objectively. A *vipassana* practitioner can thus experientially learn the importance of moral conduct for his own well-being. Morality and ethics thus become a scientific discipline which one accepts on the basis of one's own experience and not on account of social pressures or respect for a teacher...as was the fond wish of Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of all times. Some place he said:

The foundation of morality should not be made dependent on myth nor tied to any authority lest doubts about the myth or about the legitimacy of the authority imperil the foundation of sound judgement and action.

From the above description of the basic features of *vipassana*, it is apparent that it is an applied science—a technology—for inner development. In the true scientific spirit, all that it involves is 'mindful observation' free from any admixture of prejudices or subjective judgements. Like any other modern technology, it has a scientific basis which can be understood easily, and what is more important, its results can be verified by personal experience, here and now—¹⁰ *ehi passiko, ehi passiko* [Pali]—*come and see, come and see*—was the constant refrain of the Buddha.

10. Swami Budhananda, *Can One Be Scientific and Yet Spiritual?* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), p. 43.

There is no rite or ritual, dogma or *a priori* belief necessary for its practice. Like any other technological skill it can be learnt by systematic practice irrespective of one's caste, creed, religious belief or nationality.

Though its most important objective is to purify the mind of its dross, it is not a mere detergent to wash the dirt off the mental linens, to be left behind in the washroom after use; but an attitude to life, a fragrance which naturally envelops the practitioner as he develops more and more insight into the fundamental traits of human existence. It is an art of living...the art of living equanimously in spite of defeats and victories, praise and criticism, failing health and rising prices...the art of transcending, and not of suppressing, the sensory attractions. As the practice matures one naturally develops a deep insight into the fundamental Laws of Life and becomes harmonious with these—one becomes established in dhamma.

Science and Materialism

It is an historical fact that the rise of science in the post-Renaissance period was instrumental in spreading a general belief in materialism—a belief that matter is the sole Reality. All the phenomena of nature, ranging from the motion of the planets to tides in the seas, can now be explained rationally on the basis of well-understood 'laws of nature' and there was no need whatsoever of invoking 'divine intervention'. Even the origin of the sentient beings can be 'explained' on the basis of Darwin's theory of evolution, which was sought to be further extended to show that the simplest form of living protoplasm could arise from non-living nitrogenous carbon compounds under suitable conditions—thus exploding the age-old argu-

ment for theism. Attempts were made even to explain the consciousness and thinking as arising from the functions of the ganglionic cells in the cortex of the brain. The scientists of the last century firmly held that it should be possible to 'explain' the Universe with a few score elements and half a dozen elementary forces.¹¹ No wonder, for a common man today, scientific temper is synonymous with a belief in materialism—a belief in omnipotence of intellect; and any suggestion about 'transcending the intellect' is seen as unscientific.

This picture has however undergone considerable change in the last few decades. The new developments in science like the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics are bringing about a profound change in our 'common sense view' of nature. Many illuminating books have been written in the last two decades which bring out the various facets of this emerging change. We shall mention here only a few of these points which seem most pertinent to our discussion.

The quest for the 'basic building blocks' of matter led the scientists to what are often called the 'fundamental particles', like the electrons, protons, neutrons, and so on. The intuitive model of the atom which emerges from this research is similar to the planetary system—with a 'heavy' nucleus (consisting of neutrons and protons) at the centre of the immense void of an atom, and tiny electrons whirling round it at very high speeds. Naturally, at first these fundamental particles were thought to be something similar to the classical particles, albeit ultra small. This conceptualization has however been badly shaken by many discoveries. Thus experimental studies on these particles showed that these could be 'created' out of energy and could 'vanish' in energy as predicted by Einstein's theory of interconvertibility between matter and energy. Now, since en-

11. Swami Nirvedananda, *Religion and Modern Doubts* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, 1979), p. 27.

ergy is a dynamic quantity associated with activity or with processes, the obvious implication is that: 'a particle has to be conceived as a dynamic pattern, a process involving the energy which manifests itself as the particle's mass...' ¹² a picture in great contrast with our commonsense notion of 'mass' as belonging to an object, but in consonance with the insight of ancient masters: 'No doer is there; naught save the deed is,... The path exists, but not the traveller found on it.' ¹³

It will probably take even the scientific community many more years to fully come to terms with the philosophical implications of Einstein's theory of relativity. Even today the import of Minkowski's oft-quoted enunciation: 'Space by itself and time by itself are mere shadows of a four dimensional space-time continuum which is an independent reality...' ¹⁴ is not fully appreciated since we have no direct sensory or even an intuitive experience of this four-dimensional space-time continuum. It clearly implies that our perception of the world based on common sense view of absolute space and time is in error, quite akin to the erroneous view of the prisoners of Plato's *Republic*, who having never seen anything other than the shadows on the wall of their underground cave, mistook these for reality. An experience of this Independent Reality would clearly demand transcendence of the senses, coming out of the 'prison-house of sight'—a statement which we find repeatedly in the ancient texts—, but something which has been an anathema to the nineteenth century science. As Fritjof Capra, quoting Swami Vivek-

ananda, puts it, beyond this space-time of relativistic physics is the Absolute of eastern sages, for '...time, space and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen.... In the Absolute there is neither time, space nor causation.' ¹⁵ This conception thus gives a scientific authority, probably needed for the sceptics, to the vision of the ancient sages, who having experienced the Transcendent Reality directly, declared: 'There is, brethren, an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, not-compounded.' ¹⁶

Another mind-boggling characteristic of these 'fundamental particles', which has defied all conventional explanations, is their ability to exhibit both 'wave' and 'particle' behaviour under certain experimental conditions. The 'fundamental particles' thus do not seem to possess any 'intrinsic' nature waiting to be revealed to an inquisitive observer. As summed up by Capra:

My conscious decision about how to observe, say, an electron will determine the electron's properties to some extent. If I ask it a particle question, it will give me a particle answer; if I ask it a wave question, it will give me a wave answer. The electron does not have objective properties independent of my mind. ¹⁷

Thus we could say, with Sir James Jeans, that in the light of this discovery—

...the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an intruder into the realm of matter, [but]...as the creator and the governor of the realm

12. P.L. Gaur and R.R. Gaur, p. 77.

13. H.C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1986), p. 146.

14. H. Minkowski: quoted in V. Rydniek, *A B C of Quantum Mechanics* (Moscow: Mir Publishers, 1965), p. 175.

15. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Fontana, Collins Publishers, 1976), p. 186.

16. Swami Ranganathananda, *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1987), vol. 2, p. 52.

17. Fritjof Capra, p. 77.

of matter—not of course our individual mind, but the Mind in which the atoms, out of which our individual minds have grown, exist as thoughts.¹⁸

Any further understanding of the nature of Ultimate Reality clearly demands an investigation into the subtle mental plane...self-analysis rather than analysis of the world around, thus merging science with dhamma.

It is also evident from the above discussion that an intuitive physical model of these fundamental 'particles' is not possible since our senses can only detect either particle motion characterized by a localization of the object moving in a definite trajectory in space, of a wave motion characterized by a motion of the medium. This realization forms the basis of one of the very important principles of quantum mechanics, viz. the Principle of Complimentarity put forth by Niels Bohr: In any experiment with micro-particles the observer gets information not about the 'properties of the particles themselves' but about the 'properties of the particles associated with some particular situation' including, among other things, the measuring instruments. The information obtained under some definite conditions should be considered as complimentary to the information obtained under different experimental conditions. Evidence obtained under different experimental conditions cannot be comprehended within a single picture, but must be regarded as various sides (complementing one another) of a single reality, to wit, the object under investigation.¹⁹

The social and philosophical implications of this principle are profound. It gives credence to the insight of ancient masters that our attempts at understanding 'Reality' based on the study of matter through senses are similar to the attempts of five blind men trying to comprehend an elephant by feeling it with hands....for, the evidence thus obtained can never be synthesized into the true picture. Clearly, it follows that for comprehending the 'Reality' of matter some other mode of gathering knowledge—*aparoksh-anubhuti* or *direct experience*, as our ancient sages put it—is necessary.

At the social level it points out that apparently contradictory views may emerge from the same 'Reality', and wisdom lies in treating them as complementary—a message of harmony needed so much in modern times when 'appearances' often lead to unending conflicts. In fact, Bohr fervently hoped that the complementary principle would, in the near future, find a place in school education.

There have been many developments in other sciences, like biology, psychology, chemistry, neuroscience, etc. all of which indicate the emergence of a new world-view which repudiates materialism but is in consonance with the vision of eastern sages of yore. In fact, many of the insights of these sages which remained unintelligible to the masses, based as these were on the transcendent experiences, can be better appreciated today in the light of these scientific facts.

One such fundamental insight, which is extremely difficult to comprehend on the basis of our 'commonsense view' of nature, is that of *Anatta*²⁰ [Pali]—the fact of egolessness. However, when modern science tells us that the basic building block of matter is not a 'being', but a manifestation of energy,

18. James Jeans: quoted in Swami Nirvedananda, p. 37.

19. Neils Bohr: quoted in L.V. Tarasov, *Basic Concepts of Quantum Mechanics* (Moscow: Mir Publishers, 1980), p. 152.

20. *Anātman* [Sanskrit].

which is essentially a process of 'becoming', this assertion seems to make sense, for it is this seemingly 'solid' physical body—'my body'—which creates the stubborn illusion of individuality. When modern biologists point out that 98 per cent of the 10^{28} atoms of a typical human body are replaced annually by atoms from the surroundings—the earth, the trees, the animals, in fact, all living and non-living entities, it becomes evident that one cannot talk of 'individual entities' localized in space and time; we are all partners in a bio-dance.²¹ Walt Whitman's poetic insight: Every atom belonging to me as well belongs to you...is thus a scientific fact!

Molecular biology associates our individuality with the uniqueness of the genes, but here too it is the pattern of the genes which remains the same and not the *stuff* of the gene, the thousands of individual carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and other atoms that comprise it, which are in constant exchange with the surroundings.²² So, even in the view of hardcore molecular biology, our individuality is a non-material 'entity'—an abstract pattern of arrangement of various labile molecules. Coupling this understanding with the impossibility of 'exactly' locating any fundamental particle, as revealed by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, and the interconnectedness at quantum level, one is forced to agree with Capra:

...The quantum field is seen as the fundamental physical entity; a continuous medium which is present everywhere in space. Particles are merely local condensations of the field; concentrations which come and go, thereby losing their individual character and dissolving

into the underlying field.²³

This quantum field is obviously an impersonal entity—the nearest symbol of the Transcendent Reality one can possibly conceive of. And as even a layman today would testify, a subset of this field—the electromagnetic field—does have the 'power' to produce the splendid illusion of a 'living being' in every home—on the television! One can thus 'appreciate' that the fundamental quantum field 'could be' responsible for creating the illusion of the existence of 'the viewer' of the television too—the insight of *Anatta*!

Concluding Remarks

Both dhamma and science enunciate the Laws of Nature: as applicable to the inner world of human beings and the external world. There can be no disharmony between them, for as Gary Zukav points out in his recent book:

...the laws of science are the reflection in physical reality—in the world of physical objects and phenomena—of a larger nonphysical dynamics at work in nonphysical domain. When science and its discoveries are understood with the higher order of logic and understanding of the multisensory human²⁴, they reveal the same richness that Life itself displays everywhere and endlessly.... The paradigms...of science also reveal the way our species has seen itself in relation to the Universe: ...Newtonian physics reflects a species that is confident in its ability to grasp the dynamics of the physical world through the intellect; relativity reflects a species that under-

21. L. Dossey, *Space, Time and Medicine* (New York: Shambala Publications, 1982), pp. 72–3.

22. Ibid.

23. Fritjof Capra: quoted in L. Dossey, p. 80.

(Continued on page 269)

24. one whose perceptions extend beyond the sensory domain to the larger dynamical systems of which our physical reality is a part.

The World He Came To*

P. SHNEIDRE

As man's knowledge, wealth and ambition increase, he recognizes no limitations. If travel on earth and water slows him down, he invents a flying machine; he follows his curiosity into scalding volcanoes, to the ocean floor, up mountains covered forever with snow. The world's mysteries are his to solve. He has even detected a life like his own pulsing through vines, flowers and trees, and to further his own knowledge he will inspect and interrogate all of it.

By controlling the elements, Western man made himself master of the earth. Yet, still unfulfilled, he was ready to discover the secrets of distant stars and planets—and, sure enough, he has invaded those worlds too. Nor has he shied away from penetrating the inner life, where he has determined that one species of being evolves into another, and individual minds—since they must be, like everything else, a combination of matter—have a beginning and an end. He has confidence that, just as in the external world, so every internal phenomenon—even seemingly irrational ones like the desire to commit suicide—is governed by subtle but discoverable laws.

Though he has not found any convincing evidence for the survival of an individual after death, history persuades him that the life of a nation not only continues, but evolves. Thus, identifying national well-being with individual fulfilment, he sees himself in an eternal war against ignorance. Imagining that through his own efforts he can discover the farthest reaches of the ex-

ternal and internal worlds and thus achieve eternal progress, man has sailed the boat of his life into a wide sea of desire.

This tendency toward outward expansion originated in the West, but by now its influence is noticeable in India and other Eastern countries. As science and technology brought East and West closer together, the Eastern outlook on life gradually changed. This is reflected in the history of Persia, China and Japan, and it appears that the whole world will, in time, be westernized. Is this a good thing? Let us look west for an answer.

From ancient times, the severe cold in western regions induced extreme body-consciousness. This encouraged a certain selfishness, and ultimately the realization that selfish interests are best served by cooperative efforts. Thus was nationalism born. The combination of self-interest and nationalism led, in time, to the conquering and plundering of other nations. Only as the struggle for existence became easier did Western man acquire the leisure to look into himself, to long for learning and the manifestation of finer qualities. He began to cultivate subtler pursuits, beyond the mere struggle for existence. But obstacles loomed, in the form of religions and priests promising hell for anyone who dared to acquire learning. The Westerner soon found a way around this: Get rid of the priests. Ultimately rejecting scripture and religion into the bargain, he cultivated a life-style based on a denial of whatever is not perceptible to the senses.

Maintaining that truth can only be found through direct sensual evidence backed-up by reasoning and inference,

* See our introductory note under his 'Spiritual Life of God' in the October 1996 issue of *PB*.

cate the West's success must build on the same foundation, and nothing so built will escape the evils that have overtaken the West. This unfortunate syndrome becomes clear to anyone who studies Indian life after it came in contact with the West.

* * *

It was religion that made the civilization of India unique. Its chief characteristic as a whole was a spirit of self-control that guided individual and national conduct: 'Through pleasure, beyond pleasure' was the maxim of every Indian in his or her journey through this life, which was seen as preparation for the life to come. Thus the spiritual ideas of India are fundamentally different from their Western counterparts. India has always reached beyond the senses for the divine, the self, and the next world—and channeled her energies accordingly. This preoccupation with the possibility of an intuitive encounter with a greater reality is implicit in all the goals of the nation, and it colours her history.

Modelling herself on individuals who had already encountered and shone with this extraordinary reality, India set about constructing a society whose everyday customs and practices would enable all of its members to attain an intuitive knowledge of God in an organic way, through the performance of daily duties. Within this framework, the individual's personal propensities and character could thrive and become useful helpmates; even today, it is taken for granted that through austerity, self-control and intense yearning, any individual can see and become united with the cause of the universe. (The fact that Indian religion is based on the possibility of encountering a higher reality is clear from such words and expressions as *ṛṣi* [seer], *āpta* [one who has attained the goal of life], *adhikāri* [possessed of authority], *prakṛti-līna-puruṣa* [a person merged in the cause of the universe], etc., terms in use since Vedic times to designate religious figures. People were given such

But Western civilization was not founded on God; it was founded on irreligion, self-love, materialism and sensual pleasure. Any nation that wishes to dupli-

names because they demonstrated a familiarity with a reality beyond the senses.)

Reminded of this premise at every turn, no Indian could lose sight of it. All were thus oriented towards this goal. For centuries the caste or class system created no conflicts of interest and, in fact, prevented the growth of societal discontent, for when all can achieve the ultimate human experience—i.e., supreme knowledge or liberation—by the unselfish performance of their own duties, irrespective of high or low birth, what cause could there be for discontent? Unlike in Western society, where the striving for equal opportunity is linked to the struggle for comfort and enjoyment, there was little dissatisfaction among social groups in ancient India since their existence was based on everyone's equal right and opportunity to achieve inner peace regardless of outer circumstances.

It was natural and perhaps inevitable that imperialist occupation by the West should bring about changes in the distribution of wealth in India. But its influence went even deeper, producing a radical change in everyday assumptions. As a result, the impression grew that the doctrine, 'Enjoy to renounce'—the idea that enjoyment is a phase of a journey whose ultimate goal is renunciation—, was a slogan formulated by hypocritical priests; that the idea of survival after death was only poetry; and that no rule could be more unjust and unreasonable than one condemning someone to spend his entire life in the pigeonhole of society in which he was born.

More and more under the spell of the West, India rejected the ideals of renunciation and self-control and began to run after material pleasure. Thus began the decay of the ancient system of education and training—and the rise of atheism, conformity and a lack of self-confidence. A nation lost its backbone. People came to believe that

their beloved faiths and practices were erroneous; they began to feel that their traditions were as crude and semi-civilized as the West, in its scientific wisdom, said they were. Blinded by the desire for enjoyment, India forgot her ancient culture and glory. This loss of memory produced an increasing disorientation, until the nation's very existence was threatened. Finding herself conquered and dependent on others even for worldly enjoyment, India sank into despair. Having lost the way to both enjoyment and liberation, hell-bent on imitating the same deluded souls who had led her astray, the nation was bobbing on a sea of desire—a ship without a captain.

There arose a popular theory that there had never really been any cohesive national unity in India; that although there were at last some signs of it, thanks to the West, there were still obstacles to its growth. The worst of these was said to be idolatry—the worship of innumerable gods and goddesses. 'Away with idolatry', the people murmured; 'Only then will we live'. Christianity began to be preached, as well as other, imitative versions of monotheism. India was forced to its knees and made to listen to lectures. Western-style politics and sociology were prescribed, but nothing helped; frustration and despair only deepened. The railroad, telegraph and other Western improvements came into use but did not improve anything: No device had been invented to reconnect the Indian people to the ideas and ideals on which their life depended.

How could India, whose soul was religion, be revived if religion languished? Western influence had brought about its fall; was it not futile, then, to be asking the West to bring it back to life? Far from curing the disease, Western ideas were on the verge of killing the patient. □

Technical Education for a Better Tomorrow

SWAMI TATTWAJNANANANDA

Today's technological civilization has created global problems and has also failed to ensure man's ability to reach human destiny—freedom and fulfilment. Disparity between moral and technical efficiency poses the most serious problem. Education has to harmonize science and spirituality in achieving human fulfilment. Today's technical education needs a root and branch reform, says the author, a member of the Ramakrishna Order with years of experience in imparting technical education.

Our age belongs to Science and Technology. Scientific spirit, method and approach have succeeded in wringing secret after secret from nature with amazing rapidity and profusion. It has converted knowledge to power by technology, creating in the process an entirely new culture and civilization of worldwide dimension.

However, with increase in technology, there is an increase in problems of global dimensions. Ecological imbalances, environmental pollution on one side and psychic distortions like crime and inclination to suicide on the other, haunt human civilization. Technological achievements harnessed to the purpose of happy existence on this earth have proved to be merely the records of man's material progress which ensure only relative freedom from suffering on a temporary basis but falls short of man's destiny which is absolute freedom and fulfilment.

The organism seeks fulfilment. That is the end and aim of all its activities and processes as maintained by modern biology. In the Upanishads we have the beautiful concepts of freedom and fullness. We want to become integral and experience the delight of freedom, to enlarge the bounds of our awareness to get *bodhi*, complete enlightenment as the Buddha expressed it, the great aim of human evolution. Education, culture, science, socio-political processes and relig-

ion are meant to increase and enlarge the bounds of human awareness and the range and depth of human fulfilment by increasing our knowledge of and control over, not only outside world but also the deep recesses within ourselves.

We believe that the disparity between knowledge of one's own self and control over one's inner nature on the one hand and the knowledge and control over external nature on the other, in short between moral efficiency and technical efficiency, confronts us with the most serious problem that evolution has so far posed. Neglected and unresolved, this problem may as well make humanity the only possible destroyer of its own civilization.

'Unless man increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase in sorrow,' said Bertrand Russell. This wisdom is acquired through spirituality, through self-knowledge and self-control.

The sages of India discovered the divine core behind the physical, neural and psychical dimensions and it was identified as the Atman, the Divine Self. This discovery passed tests of several sages and emerged as truth about the science of human possibilities proclaiming the infinite dimension of what to the senses such as our eyes appear

as the finite, organically limited individual. This Atman has to be thought of and got in touch with through disciplining the senses and calming the mind—*sama* and *dama* of the Hindu tradition. Going deeper into the depths of oneself through meditation, the wider and more comprehensive becomes one's understanding and sympathy. All spiritual growth is a movement towards that one centre where all objects and the subject meet and that is the idea of God in Vedanta. 'The soul is a circle of which the circumference is nowhere but the centre is in the body. God is a circle whose circumference is nowhere but whose centre is everywhere,' as defined by Swami Vivekananda in San Francisco a hundred years ago.

Education has to enable students to achieve at least a semblance of harmony between spirituality and science, contemplation and action. The harmony of ethical, aesthetic, spiritual values and sciences became revealed in our time in the deep spiritual relationship Swami Vivekananda, the representative of modern scientific and philosophic knowledge, had in his discipleship with Sri Ramakrishna, the full embodiment of spiritual wisdom. This teacher-student relationship showed that all such values emerge from the depths of human spirit at a certain stage of human evolution and after achieving some measure of mastery over the environment by individuals for fulfilling their physical needs. It is a folly to expect that such values will automatically result from industry or from technological manipulations of physical nature or from the wealth resulting from such achievements as substantiated by many examples from the developed West.

College and University education is generally called Higher Education. But it is obvious that the spiritual education Swami Vivekananda received from Sri Ramakrishna should be considered the highest, for,

it brought harmony between the East and the West, the sacred and secular, religion and science, besides building strength of character and fostering infinite compassion. All education from the school level to the university level should lead to this highest level of wisdom if the objective of education is to be fulfilled.

The present system of education is devoid of any such goal or strategy. Evidently we could not introduce value-based education in spite of pious wishes of many Commissions. The system introduced by Macaulay in 1835 to Europeanise Hindus and make them sensual, bookish, with the mentality of a clerk continues and one is tempted to observe that the foreign rule did less damage to the moral and ethical fibre of Indian society than the rule under free India.

Coming to Technical Education, a number of ills plague the system and considering both quality and quantity we need a root and branch reform of the whole system.

1. In any advanced system of education, politicians take the back seat where they mainly concern themselves with legislation leaving education to the industrialists and the academicians which is not the case with us in India. Our educational institutes have become breeding grounds for politicians of all hues and colours where both the teachers and the students indulge in anything but education. Various Unions and Associations with self-centred interest treat our institutions as political arena, especially in West Bengal. If we want a better tomorrow, we must stop this immediately. Every institution must have a politics-free atmosphere, though political science may be introduced as part of humanities and social sciences. Centralizing the system in the name of giving protection to the backward breeds shoddiness and mediocrity. Decentralization and privatization is the watchword and

the earlier it comes to the institutions the better. The power structure in terms of administrative, academic and financial control needs to be handed over by phases to local bodies aiming at autonomy for the institutions. We have to start trusting each other more at all levels in the hierarchy so that when power and responsibility come to rest on the shoulders of each, the institution will function better.

2. It must be quickly realized that the days of subsidized education are over and resources have to be generated by the institutions themselves through the levy of fees, taking up research projects and consultancy-testing services, and continuing education. If the high cost of education cannot be borne by our budding engineers, then they may have to repay the amount spent on them when they get employed on completing their education.

3. Autonomy should be given to as many institutions as possible where flexibility in appointment of personnel, and admissions, examinations and assessment of students could be implemented. Multipoint entry, Credit/Semester system will ensure the development of a multifaceted personality which a human being should have. A youth who commits a mistake in choosing a wrong course is penalized for life which in today's India is a depressing scenario. Though technology covers almost every aspect of life today, it will be essential to offer various other avenues too to our youth in order to develop their potential fully.

4. The business community has to come forward in a big way to help technical institutions. As the students of technical institutions are fed into the industries, it will be in their own interest to participate actively in shaping the budding engineers, technicians and workers. Faculty exchange, students' projects, assessment, syllabus updating, seminars and continuing education are some areas for interaction between the institutions and the industries.

5. The annual examinations in the present examination system are like a full scale war between the students and the question papers, where 3-4 tier policing is done in an attempt to ensure fair play, everyone looking the other way when it comes to a crunch. Invigilators, observers, roving teams, police, district magistrate officials 'observe' students perform the ritual of copying without serious hindrance. The emphasis on written examinations of a descriptive type puts a burden on the students to store words from books into memory or other secondary devices and then transfer them on to answer-scripts in the stipulated time after which they are free to go back to square one of their understanding—what they learnt in actual work situation: a hibernation period every industry pays for. It is a saddening plight. Can we be more practical by using more time in instructions (20 weeks now) and less in vacations (90 days plus sundays now) ensuring enough time in absorption by simulated work conditions using continuous evaluation through teacher-student interaction? It is absurd and unjust to classify a person once and for all as being first class or third class when he is only twenty-two years old. It has to be recognized that there are slow growers who blossom late in life and likewise there are brilliant starters who fail to live up to their early promise. Will it be out of place in saying that the onus of sending a 'finished product'—his student, out into the work field be on the teacher?

6. The agent who brings about changes in the system is obviously the teacher. After the father and the mother, a student's respect is due to the teacher who guides his character. Besides imparting instructions in the subjects of study, a teacher should consciously or unconsciously convey to his students the following ideals:

- a) Dignity of labour. All levels of work have to be recognized as important for the welfare of society. There is no

substitute for hard and sincere work.

- b) Duty and rights are the obverse and reverse of the coin of work, the duty of one forming the right of another.
- c) Time management.
- d) Entrepreneurship to be eulogized. A technical personnel should aim at self-employment.
- e) Energy saved is energy gained.
- f) Eco-nomy is related to Eco-logy through respect for nature.
- g) Interest of oneself should be considered secondary to that of the community, that of the community secondary to that of the nation, and everything secondary to Self-realization.
- h) Value-orientation should be carried out even through the teaching of subjects in the curriculum.

7. Co-curricular activities have no weightage in the educational system today. So we find series of debacles on the world arena. Games and sports are as important as studies in personality development for general students, expertise development for sportsmen and psychological boosters for participating teachers in developing a rapport with students. In assessment, weightage should be given to all-round personality development of the student—some marks being reserved for co-curricular activities like games and sports. Participation of students in seminars, conferences, and meetings of importance is almost nil today. This has to be consciously implemented to keep student community updated on vital issues.

8. Our technical System has been working in isolation for long and has not succeeded in changing the conditions of our countryside. India lives in the villages is an oft-quoted and ever ignored slogan. Existing vocations in villages need a fillip through appropriate technologies. Technical faculty can offer consultancy-testing services. Agricultural practices have to be mechanized. Our young engineers like our

doctors are in no mood to serve the villagers willingly; they would rather be unemployed in cities than be toiling in rural areas for the uplift of the masses. All the ecofriendly technologies are being developed in the West but we need indigenous research.

Imagination and innovation can be encouraged in rural projects which could be made compulsory for students.

9. A subject in 'Personality Development' should be introduced where the principles and practices of Vedanta can be imparted by competent teachers. We have to convince students rationally and emotionally that to become a complete person much more is necessary than merely passing examinations and getting some certificates. The following contents could be thought of:

- a) You and yourself, b) You and the people, and, c) You and your work.

a) You and yourself

- i) Knowing yourself—weaknesses and strengths.
- ii) Developing yourself—how to get over weaknesses.
- iii) Obstructions—to your growth.
- iv) Contacting yourself—meditation and reflection.
- v) External appearance—body.
- vi) Success in life—define.
- vii) How to make life meaningful—fulfilment.
- h) You can change the world—source of all power is thought.
- i) Idea of God—centre of all individuals.

b) You and the people

- i) A welcome personality—charm.
- ii) Shyness—how to get rid of it.
- iii) Art of conversation—listening power.
- iv) How to win friends—long term, short term.
- v) Understanding people—variety makes life.
- vi) What is love and concern—define.
- vii) Leadership—as against bossing.

- viii) You and the other sex.
- ix) Social justice and politics.
- c) *You and your work*
- i) Work without worry—karma yoga.
- ii) Interest in work—development.
- iii) Thought power—motivation.
- iv) Opportunities—how to win and use.
- v) Efficiency—define.
- vi) Use of time—time=money.
- vii) What is responsibility.
- viii) Growing in strength and maturity by facing problems.
- ix) Dignity of labour.
- x) How to use power properly.

Such 'Personality Development' classes in theory and practice have to be made interesting and joyful through practical sessions, camps and seminars. A subject

called 'Moral Science' with chalk and talk method is too moralizing and is disliked by the students especially at the college level. Hence special attention has to be given. The three subjects can be taken up in three years of courses and be condensed or expanded as desired.

In all, it is our observation that as Swami Vivekananda put it a hundred years ago, a person will be complete who can combine in his personality the scientific temper of the West and the spirituality of India, the work ethics of the West and the contemplative attitude of the East. Hence in the Indian context, technical education has to take serious note of emerging technologies, create flexibility and also bring in personality development of an individual towards perfection and fulfilment. □

Dhamma and Science

(Continued from page 261)

stands the limiting relationship between the absolute and the personalized conception of it; and quantum physics reflects a species that is becoming aware of the relationship of its consciousness to the physical world.²⁵

It would thus not be an exaggeration to say that for a deeper understanding of modern science there is a need to develop the intuitive insights which can enable us to get experiences more rich than that possible with the five basic senses. Clearly, the process of evolution of such 'multisensory personality' can be hastened by living life in conformity with the Universal Laws—the dhamma—by practising *Vipassana*.

The relationship between science and dhamma can be succinctly put by paraphrasing the beautiful epigram of Albert Einstein²⁶: 'Science without dhamma

is blind; for dhamma gives us the vision of what ought to be done, and science gives us the power to do so. The developments in science have unleashed enormous power... but power can do as much harm as it can do good. Today there is a crying need to channelize this power to ensure the very survival of humanity, for otherwise Man will destroy himself by misusing it. This can only be done if we reorient our lives in the light of the quintessence of dhamma..., by practising morality (*sīla*, [Pali])²⁷, taming the senses by the practice of concentration (*samādhi*, [Skt.]) and purifying the mind by the practice of *vipassana*. □

25. G. Zukav, *The Seat of the Soul* (London: Rider Books, 1990), p. 67.

26. A. Einstein: quoted in Swami Budhananda, p. 31.

27. *Śīla* [Sanskrit].

Synopsis of Question-Answer Sessions

SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA

The Swami, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order and Editor of the Order's Gujarati Journal, Sri Ramakrishna Jyot, answers questions put to him by students during a meeting organized by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in educational institutions in this region. This is the second instalment and a continuation from the October 1996 issue.

Q.: What to do when bad thoughts come to the mind?

(A student from GIC, Champavat)

A.: Do not get disturbed when bad thoughts come to the mind because that is the nature of the mind. As long as our mind has not become pure, bad thoughts will appear in the mind now and then. The best way under the circumstances is not to give any importance to it. Simultaneously, try to purify the mind through meditation, prayer and japam, and by reading good books. Go towards the East and the West will fall behind automatically. If you dwell on bad thoughts, they will overpower you.

A man went to a holy person and requested him to teach him a method by which he could control ghosts. The holy man tried to dissuade him from this but the man would not listen. Finally in order to get rid of him, the holy man taught him a simple procedure for controlling ghosts but warned him—'You must meditate on this particular thought but beware! there is a monkey who does not allow anyone to control ghosts. As soon as you begin to meditate in the way I have told you, the monkey will appear. But if you do not allow the monkey to enter your mind, you will be able to control ghosts.'

The man went back and started meditating in the manner prescribed by the holy

man. As soon as he started meditation, the thought came to the mind, 'Let me not allow the monkey to come to my mind.' As soon as this thought came, the monkey appeared on the mental horizon! So, if you think that the monkey idea should not come, the monkey idea arises invariably. Similarly, if you give importance to bad thoughts, the bad thoughts will overpower you. As an emergency situation, another simple method is to continued to gaze at the picture of any holy personality dear to you till the bad thought leaves you. This has been tried out successfully by many. For further details, you may read *Mind & Its Control* published by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.

Q.: How to control anger?

(A student from GIC, Barakat)

A.: Try to analyse why you become angry. If you list down the occasions when you got angry during the last month, you will find that the main reason for your becoming angry was that something did not happen the way you wanted it to. So, if we remember that everything will not and cannot always happen in this world the way we want them to happen, then the irritation will become less. Moreover, if we fill our mind in the early morning with holy thoughts, and if our mind is serene and calm, no outward circumstances will be able to disturb us. But if the mind is full of tension, even an

ordinary disturbance will irritate us. So, try to keep your mind calm and serene by good reading, meditation and prayer.

Prepare a profit and loss account of the occasions when you got angry during the last month. If you remember that there is a difference between 'becoming angry' and 'showing anger for correcting others', you will find out that anger results in loss only, and sometimes the loss is irreparable. Try to remember the consequences when the wave of anger is coming to your mind.

Patanjali in his Yoga Aphorisms says, 'To obstruct thoughts which are inimical to Yoga, contrary thoughts should be brought.'—वितर्कबाधने प्रतिपक्षभावनम्।
—(Yoga Aphorism: II.33).

Swami Vivekananda, while explaining this aphorism says, 'when a big wave of anger has come into the mind, how are we to control it? Just by raising an opposite wave. Think of love. Sometimes a mother is very angry with her husband, and while in that state, the baby comes in, and she kisses the baby; the old wave dies out and a new wave arises, love for the child.'

Another emergency measure is to try to repeat 10 times the holy mantra in which you have faith as soon as you find the wave of anger coming to you.

A girl used to visit one of our centres regularly. She was desirous of receiving initiation—Mantra Diksha—from the President Maharaj of our Order who had then come to that place. But her mother objected to this proposal. The girl came to one of our monks and stared weeping. The monk asked her to bring her mother to the Ashrama. After she came, the monk clarified some of the doubts prevailing in the mother's mind, because of which she was refusing to give permission. After the con-

versation with the monk, she was satisfied and permitted her daughter to take Mantra Diksha. A year later, our Revered President Maharaj visited the same centre. One fine morning, the mother of that girl came to that monk and asked, 'I have learnt that Revered President Maharaj is coming. Will he give initiation this time?' The monk replied, 'Yes. Why are you asking this question?' The mother said, 'I want to receive initiation and I want that my other three daughters also should receive initiation.' The monk was astonished and asked, 'Last time you objected to your daughter receiving initiation and now you yourself want to have it. What is the matter?' The mother replied, 'The fact is that my eldest daughter who took initiation was very good, her only defect was that she used to lose her temper frequently. But after the initiation there is a remarkable change in her behavioural pattern and I am amazed at her transformation within a year. To tell you frankly, I am also a bit hot-tempered, so I would also like to get rid of my anger and I want my other three younger daughters also to benefit from initiation.' So the repetition of the holy mantra has a great calming effect on the mind and that may prove to be a permanent solution for an irritable temper.

Q.: For getting success should we depend on our own self-effort or on destiny?
(A student from Central School, Pithoragarh)

A.: Depend on your self-effort. Do not go to an astrologer for knowing whether you will pass in the examinations or not! Try to invest all your energy and time in working hard for achieving your goal rather than frittering away your energy and time finding out your destiny. If one goes to an astrologer, it is a sign of weakness. We do not deny the science of astrology or palmistry

(Continued on page 274)

The International Seminar at Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler and the Inauguration of the German Vedanta House at Bindweide 6th to 8th September 1996

An international seminar on the theme 'The World is One and we are One' was held between 6th and 8th September 1996. Nine monks of the Ramakrishna Order and over 130 Vedanta friends from various countries—the Netherlands, Belgium, France, England, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, South Africa, Tanzania, the USA, Canada, Japan, India, Vietnam, Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala, and New Zealand—came together to exchange views in this conference which was held at a comfortable and quiet guest house.

Frank Ziesing, the President of the German Vedanta Society, opened the seminar on 6th September at 4 p.m. with a warm and hearty welcome. In his opening speech Swami Prabuddhananda highlighted the principal ideas of Swami Vivekananda. On the topic of Swami Vivekananda's trip through Europe in the summer of 1896, Swami Vidyatmananda had prepared a lecture-cum-slide presentation which, in his absence, was offered by Frank Ziesing himself. 'Tolerance: Vivekananda's ideas and the UNESCO's actions' was the topic on which spoke Bikas C. Sanyal, Senior Advisor of the UNESCO in Paris. A message sent by Swami Ranganathananda* was read out by Corinna Zaluskowski, the organizing secretary of the seminar.

The evening session commenced at 8 p.m. with an offering of prayers in Sanskrit by Swami Medhasananda. Swami Tripura-

nanda spoke on seeing the 'face of God everywhere'. Quoting Swami Vivekananda, Swami Chidbhasananda said, 'the whole of the Western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. What will save Europe is the religion of the Upanishads.' The perception of Unity in diversity was the theme on which Swami Jyotirupananda spoke. Paying homage to Swami Vivekananda and expressing the effect Vedanta had on her, Daphne Goodier from England recounted her childhood memories of her church, her doubting youth, and her spiritual transformation brought about by the message of Swami Vivekananda and the Vedantic thought. The day came to an end with musical performances: Chopin's 'Nocturne' played by 'The Dutch Mothers', oriental songs by Bhaktidas from Spain, and capella songs by the British Vedantin Eve Wright.

On Saturday at 6:30 a.m., after meditation under the guidance of Swami Veetamohananda, the participants were given a treat to songs with a harmonium, violin and tabla accompaniment. After breakfast, the participants read together prayers from major world religions and observed silent recollection for a few minutes.

Swami Amarananda spoke on the mind, our biggest enemy. The German Vedantin Karina Martinelli, in her slide show 'A Way to the Self' reported on a 17-day pilgrimage through India in 1995 in the company of Swami Veetamohananda and some Vedanta friends. The French Vedantin Yves Baudron reflected on the 'Freedom of

* The text of the message appeared in the January 1997 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

the Soul' and urged his listeners to pay attention to the words of Sri Ramakrishna and, giving up our endless seeking for things of the world, seek divine Love and total Freedom.

Swami Dayatmananda in his lecture put forward some important questions: What does it mean to become a Vedantin? Can we really become One? To whom does the world appear as One? What is the status of Vedanta one hundred years after Swami Vivekananda's visit to Europe? Saying that the world is of necessity multiple and diverse, he remarked that 'Real transformation is not of the world but within our hearts.' What comes to us from the world in the form of experiences gives us the opportunity to gain for ourselves a transformed outlook. 'Vedanta can only be caught, not taught', said he and observed that we can 'catch' Vedanta only if our hearts are properly prepared following a three-step process: Acceptance of the state of bondage in which we are at present, seeking a self-transformation through a struggle to improve oneself, and abiding in one's real nature with a coordination between the inner vision and the external action.

Swami Saradananda of South Africa spoke next tracing the Vedanta movement in South Africa. He expressed joy that the isolation for the past 40 years owing to apartheid was finally over and one can now embrace members of the Vedanta family in different parts of the world.

The afternoon session began at 3 p.m. The Camaldolese monk of Benedictine Order and follower of Bede Griffith's Shantivanam Ashram in South India, Brother Martin, spoke about the purpose of religion—'to discover our real Self as a gift of God'. Lama Manfred Werner spoke on 'Meditation and Mysticism in Buddhism' while Sufi Wakil Schilbach talked on the same theme in re-

lation to Sufism.

Concluding the session, Swami Veetamohananda observed that religion teaches self-expansion and self-sacrifice, not self-seeking. We need to take what is the best in each religion and incorporate it into our religious practice. Each religion offers to the soul a special quality: Islam, a sense of equality, brotherhood and pragmatism; Christianity, love and sacrifice; Buddhism, renunciation, compassion, non-violence and rationality; Vedanta, the unity of consciousness, the need for a direct experience of the ultimate Reality, and an attitude of acceptance of other religious approaches. Meditation is largely a cognitive process involving the knower, the known, and the process of knowing which connects the two. This knowledge allows the consciousness to expand.

After tea break, Swami Medhasananda gave a report on the Vedanta movement in Japan and spoke about the present problems in some religious movements in Japan. He expressed a hope for the expansion of Vedanta work in Japan though not at the expense of existing religions. John Manetta, a Greek Vedanta friend who translates Vedanta books into Greek and organizes regular meetings at his house in Athens, read a paper on the Vedanta movement and the spiritual environment in Greece. Piet van der Wulp, the President of the Dutch Ramakrishna Society, underlined the uniqueness of the seminar and presented a picture of the Society's activities in Holland. The Catholic monk Frère Venent from France talked on the 'unity of religions' and concluded his speech with a song.

After dinner, Mickael Tchiriatiev, the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Society in Russia, reported on the many difficulties of the Vedanta movements in St. Petersburg and Moscow. He thanked the organizers of

the German Vedanta Movement who made it possible for Swami Jyotirupananda and three Russian representatives to attend the 'beautiful meeting'. He related the main activities in Russia: travelling with Swami Jyotirupananda to many Russian cities to hold conferences, and publishing books. He gave some books as a present to Frank Ziesing for the future library of the German Vedanta House. After a video film show and a music performed by the group 'The Dutch Mothers', Swami Prabuddhananda brought the seminar to a close with the words: 'I have heard a lot of languages, German, French, etc., which I could not understand, but yet I understood what was said because they were spoken in the language of the heart.'

On the 8th at about 10:30 a.m., at the

Vedanta House in Bindweide, Swami Prabuddhananda opened the inauguration ceremony with a short speech. Thereafter all the nine monks of the Ramakrishna Order who were present chanted Vedic hymns together. As there was not sufficient room for the 200 people present, in groups they attended the Puja performed by Swami Amarananda in the shrine room, the bhajans of Bhaktidas in the lecture hall, while some others participated in a guided tour through the rooms of the House and the premises outside. At 11:30 a.m. Swami Veetamohananda lighted the Homa Fire outside the house. After lunch the participants expressed thanks to the organizers of the seminar and the inauguration ceremony, and left for their destination carrying with them the inspiring memory of the event. □

Synopsis of Question-Answer Sessions

(Continued from page 271)

but what is the use of wasting time in knowing the destiny?

There is a popular saying:

कर खुद को बुलन्द इतना
कि हर तकदीर के पहले
खुदा बन्दे से खुद पूछे,
बता तेरी रज़ा क्या है?

*Kar khudko buland itna ki har takdir ke
pahale khuda bande se khud pucchey, bata teri
raza kya hai?*

*Make yourself so strong that before writ-
ing your destiny even God has to ask you*

what is your wish.

There is something called destiny. We do not deny it. But who creates this destiny? According to Vedanta, we are the creator of our own destiny. Our present destiny has been determined by our past Karma—efforts. That very thing proves that our future destiny will depend on our present self-effort. That is why, instead of wasting our energy and time in knowing about destiny, we should concentrate our energies in reforming our destiny by our self-efforts.

(to be continued)

The sages say that the Reality is one and unchanging. When craving is renounced, unity and diversity cease to exist in the mind.

—Avadhuta Gita, 22

Reviews & Notices

ECLIPSES IN HINDU LIFE AND THOUGHT; by Jayasree Hariharan; publ. The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Madras 600 004; 1995; pp. 105; Rs. 70/-.

The planets have had a very strong fascination for the Hindus. The inability to explain celestial events or their sheer awesomeness resulted in many fear complexes and superstitions, which continue to have a hold on the Hindu mind, even in this age of advanced science and technology, when man even walked on the moon. The great faith in horoscope is a significant case in point.

Of the celestial events, the eclipses and sighting of comets have a predominant influence. The popular legend associated with eclipses is the one found in the *Mahabharata* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. It is associated with the episode of the churning of the milk-ocean when *amṛta* is obtained. Vishnu contrives to distribute it only to the *devas*. However, an *asura* manages to smuggle himself into the side of the *devas* and partake of the ambrosial food. The sun and the moon discover this and point him out to Vishnu, who then beheads him. Out of the immortal body and head of the *asura*, comes into existence *asuras*, Rahu and Ketu. As a revenge, the *asuras* periodically swallow the sun and the moon and thus occurs the eclipse.

The present book traces the ideas that have existed in India regarding eclipses, right from the Vedic age through the Itihasa-Purana Period. It is a small but well-researched and well-documented book. The project was carried under the guidance of the eminent scholar, S.S. Janaki.

The legend mentioned above pertains to the Itihasa (Epic) period. It is interesting to learn that during the Vedic age, eclipse was considered to be only a concealment of the planet by darkness. All Vedic prayers were only for the removal of darkness. The early Indian astronomers made quite accurate calculations to predict the time, duration

and direction of the eclipses. They also made observations regarding the types of eclipse, the colour of the eclipsed disc, etc. They made two very significant observations—that the solar and the lunar eclipses occurred only on the new moon and full moon days respectively and that they occurred only when the moon and the sun were in particular orbital conjunction.

At the express wishes of the Foundation, the author has also described the various rites and taboos to be observed during an eclipse. Considering their dominant role in Hindu life, this conclusion makes the book complete.

The author has used a highly clinical approach in delineating all extant data. She has provided references and relevant Sanskrit verses. The author has done commendable research. The book will be useful to modern astronomers as well as to the general readers.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao
Hyderabad

SPOKEN SANSKRIT (Sanskrita Vyavaharah): Editor S.S. Janaki; publ. The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Madras 600 004; 1995; pp. 199; Rs. 120/- (US \$ 15).

Languages are modes of inter-human communication. While some languages have evolved over the centuries to lose any semblance to its original form, others have become totally extinct. Yet others have almost ceased to be spoken languages. An important example of this latter being Sanskrit, which nevertheless holds sway over a large number of Indians. This is so because, firstly, the whole of the Vedic literature which dictates all religious rites of upper caste Hindus, is in Sanskrit, and secondly, a vast literature including two great Epics, the Vedanta and other philosophical treatises, the bhakti literature, dramas, poetry and treatises on various natural sciences and fine

arts are in Sanskrit. Thus Sanskrit continues to be a very important written language. Although the study of Sanskrit took a back seat with the introduction of English, one sees renewed interest in it, in post-independent India.

There have been sincere efforts to revive Sanskrit as a spoken language. The need for this is a moot issue. Hebrew, which for long remained only a scriptural language, has now become the national language of Israel for socio-political reasons. It is doubtful whether Sanskrit will gain such a status, because the Indo-Aryan languages are all based on Sanskrit and most of the major Dravidian languages have heavily borrowed from it.

There however continue to be vigorous attempts in various quarters to revive Sanskrit as a major spoken language. There is said to be a village in Karnataka where no member is allowed to speak any other language.

The Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, Madras, had published a book on simple spoken Sanskrit in 1990 and, encouraged by the demand for it, have now brought out its second edition. The present book has nineteen lessons with Sanskrit text and English translation. There is a glossary at the end. To understand the lessons one needs to have a basic knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, although useful notes have been provided at the end of each lesson.

One of the strong points of English is, it has borrowed and continues to take in words from other languages and has thus enriched itself. Passionate lovers of spoken Sanskrit should realize that it is not necessary to translate scientific and technological terms which have become a part of common parlance in India. Thus it is better to retain the word 'computer' as such, than find a long-winding Sanskrit translation. Thus alone can one introduce Sanskrit as a spoken language or a popular language.

Sanskrit lovers will find the book useful and very easy to follow.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao

INTEGRAL NON-DUALISM: By Kanchi Ram; publ. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007; first edition 1995; pp. 189; Rs. 175/-.

Integral Non-Dualism is a critical exposition of Vijnanabhikṣu's philosophy by Prof. Kanchi Ram of Hans Raj College, University of Delhi. Originally designed as a post-doctoral minor research project, it developed into a thoroughly researched work of considerable significance. It scrutinizes the fundamental concepts of Advaita philosophy in the light of the commentaries of Vijnanabhikṣu on *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* (*sāṅkhyapravacana-bhāṣya*), *Pātañjal Yoga Sūtras* (*Yogavārttika*), and *Brahma Sūtras* (*Brahma Sūtrarjūbhāṣya*). The book also reveals the author's penchant for brevity and the entire work is thus, a neat presentation of Vijnanabhikṣu's *avibhāgādvaita*. The title 'Integral Non-Duality' given by the author expresses well Vijnanabhikṣu's special category of non-duality.

The brief introduction which discusses Vijnanabhikṣu's identity, his times and place is important in that it places Vijnanabhikṣu in a proper time frame helping the reader understand the influences that led to the development of his concepts of *avibhāgādvaita*. The philosophical study is presented in six chapters of sufficient length.

All the philosophical arguments of Vijnanabhikṣu have been arranged and examined with reference to the concepts of (1) Absolute, (2) The Self, and (3) Prakṛiti in the first three chapters that follow the Introduction. Vijnanabhikṣu presupposes Brahman as the locative cause of the universe and thus saves It from any proclivity to change. The assignment of the locative cause to Brahman goes a long way in building up the special theory propounded by Vijnanabhikṣu.

Chapter V deals with the important Theory of Double Reflection. This concept of double reflection had been raising a controversy among the Vedantists. The author points out how Vijnanabhikṣu's exposition of the theory of double reflection distin-

guishes him from earlier Vedantists. This chapter presents the basic ideology of Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta as regards the theory of knowledge. All these three systems hold the relationship between the Self and the act of knowing to be unreal [whether the Self is unified with the reflections of modes of the mind (*buddhivṛtti*) in the Self, or the real modes are unified with the reflections of the Self in the mind]. The Self appears to be in bondage on account of the image of the modes in the former case, while it is the modes which seem to enter into relationship with the image of the Self in the latter case. To talk of bondage or freedom of the Image of the Self does not carry conviction, though it looks reasonable when the states of freedom and bondage are referred to the Real Self; notwithstanding the nature of this relationship (p. 109). The author examines the Theory of Double Reflection in the light of various later works of Balarama Udasina and K.C. Bhattacharyya. The concept of integral non-dualism thus stands explained in this chapter.

It appears that Vijñānabhikṣu's philosophy runs parallel to that of Jñāneshwar in that the latter also undermines *Māyā* and conceives of the unity of the rock-cut temple of Kailasa where the worshipper and the worshipped are all hewed out of one solid rock.

Vijñānabhikṣu believed that it was the philosophy of the unreality of the world (*Māyā*), which was responsible for man's alienation from his environment. The author has really done justice to Vijñānabhikṣu's synthesizing philosophy and sound blending of Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta. The title of the book stands justified.

It must however be mentioned that the entire presentation of the author is scholastic and scholarly. Lay readers may therefore find it extremely difficult to wade through these pages. A simplified version of Vijñānabhikṣu's philosophy is a desideratum.

The book is finely produced and is worthy of the publisher's reputation.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil
Mumbai

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS HUMAN BONDS: By J.B. Goyal; publ. Falcon Books, O-5, Tej Bagh Colony, Patiala 147 001; 1995; pp. 203; Rs. 265/- (India), \$ 25 (US).

The uniqueness of a multi-faceted personality is that his/her character sustains scrutiny and interpretation from a vast and diverse range of attitudes and perspectives. The extensive range of biographies being written on Vivekananda is an instance of this. In each the author looks at Swamiji from his/her frame of reference and experience. Obviously, since the life of Vivekananda is able to provide inspiration to such a variety of readings, it is indeed a life worth recording, even with predictable repetitions, by all who feel that they have new insights to offer about this unique personality.

J.B. Goyal writes about the human aspects of Swamiji's character in his book *Swami Vivekananda: His Human Bonds*, with a view that the greatness of this person lies not so much in his divinity or heroic achievements as in the basic spirit of love for his fellow humans which made him reach the pinnacle of glory as he did. The author deplores the fact that not much evidence is available about Vivekananda's day to day life and he takes up the task of garnering what little is available to put it under different chapters offering a collage of Swamiji's personality. His own opinions on and observations about Swamiji are authenticated by extensive quotes from authoritative biographies of Vivekananda and this has an added advantage: those who are not very familiar with Vivekananda literature may feel impelled to read the originals after being introduced to chunky quotes from numerous sources by J.B. Goyal.

The book begins with a Foreword by Ann Myren of Vivekananda Foundation, California, which says that 'J.B. Goyal... brings us the poetry in Swami Vivekananda's life, lighting up his words and wisdom. He moves us closer to the real Vivekananda....' There is an introduction by Dr. Sukumar Azhikode of New Delhi

and a comment by Dr. R.N. Matta, Former Principal, Professor and Head of English, Government College, Ludhiana. These are followed by the author's Prologue where he explains the purpose of the book because it is difficult for many to reconcile themselves to the idea of acknowledging the presence of human bonds in a world-renouncing monk that Swamiji was. According to the author, Swamiji 'renounced the world but never negated life' (xx) and 'Swamiji's human bonds strengthen our faith in the purity, dignity and glory of human relations...' (xxi).

With these justifications the author takes up his task with great zeal and conviction dividing the book into ten chapters. The first six chapters and the tenth one narrate the chronological sequence of events in the life of Vivekananda but with a stress on the human relations which impelled his progress. The first chapter is on Swamiji's mother who 'inspired him' (2) with references to the father whose influence helped him develop 'an enormous compassion for all including the sinners and the wicked' (4). The next chapter deals with the fruitful master-disciple relations which young Naren had with Ramakrishna who lavished on him profound and unlimited affection. This Swamiji in later life passed on to others which the author describes from the third chapter onwards. Those mentioned are 'Sharat—the first disciple', 'Akhandananda—his shadow', 'Alasinga Perumal', 'Kidi', 'Dakshinakaran (later Swami Kalyanananda)—a slave of love', 'Raja of Khetri—a steady friend', and 'Raja of Ramnad' in the third chapter; interesting interactions with Western disciples and friends such as Katherine Abbot Sanborn, Henry Wright, George W. Hale, his wife and daughters, Mary and Harriet, the Lyon family, Madame Emma Calve, Sara Bernhardt, Madame Paul Verdier, Mrs. John T. Bagley, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss Dutcher, Mrs. Funke, Christine Greenstidel, Josephine MacLeod, Mrs. William Sturges, Mrs. Blodgett, the Mead sisters, Emily Aspinall, Thomas and Edith Allen, Mrs. Clinton, Captain Sevier and his wife, Margaret Noble, Goodwin, Laura Glenn and Swamiji's immense love

for all of them illumine the fourth chapter. Chapters five and six take up details of two important relations among these: Sister Nivedita and Goodwin.

The seventh chapter speaks about Swamiji's unique relationship with pet animals: another dimension of his all-enveloping affection. The chapters eight and nine form the very core of the author's contention about the human side of Swamiji and are of immense interest to the readers. Here the author recounts small, often apparently insignificant incidents and details about Swamiji's life: under the head 'To be Cheerful is to be Religious' he narrates humorous quips and quick repartee which Swamiji was famed for; 'Inspiring Incidents' also describes little known incidents which make Swamiji come alive for the reader. The final chapter poignantly describes the end of all this activity but exhibits also the potential new beginning which is inherent in this apparent end.

Swami Vivekananda: His Human Bonds makes a noteworthy contribution to the Vivekananda literature extant today. It is well brought out and readable but for some avoidable oversight of grammar and collocation. In places the constructions are rather awkward but otherwise the book fulfils the expectations raised by the title. It ought to be read by everyone interested in Swamiji's rich personality.

Prof. M. Sivaramkrishna, Hyderabad

THE SĀNKHĪYAKĀRIKĀ OF ĪŚVARAKRṢṢNA with THE TATTVAKAUMUDĪ OF VĀCASPATIMĪŚRA: trans. Swami Virupakshananda; publ. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004; 1995; pp. 135 + vii; Rs. 20/-.

Ever since its composition, the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* has been widely recognized as the 'normative' manual of the Sankhya system. A short text of only seventy verses, its handling of all the consequential matters of the system is at once full in scope and brief in treatment; it is indeed a compendium of Sankhya philosophy. One finds—to one's relief—nothing of the strict rigidity which is

the usual hall mark of philosophical works. Far from being arid or austere, Īśvarakṛṣṇa's imaginative style is lively and full of striking analogies. Some might blame the book for its lack of exactitude but, all the same, the book is a great help to grasp more easily the abstruse truths in which the Sankhya abounds.

The *Sāṅkhyakārikā* has a few commentaries attached to it, but none has gained such favourable reception as the lucid *Tattvakaumudi*. The *Tattvakaumudi* is a clear-cut delineation of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and does not show the thorough examination of issues so characteristic of Vācaspati Miśra's other commentaries. Being a product of the eighth-ninth centuries, it is, to a noticeable degree, influenced by the emergent Advaita Vedanta. Vacaspati's work on Sankhya is especially significant since it ushered in a sub-commentarial tradition that has come down to the present day.

This translation prepared by Swami Virupakshananda (who has to his credit a fine translation of Annambhatta's *Tarkasaṅgrahadīpikā*) is straightforward and as reliable as any other available today. It has also a fairly good index of Sanskrit terms occurring in the *Kārikā*. With this the Swami has made easy of access two important texts that have come to be accepted as summary accounts of the Sankhya standpoint.

Swami Bhasvatananda
Belur Math

HANUMAN VIGRAHA: By Shailendra Mishra; publ. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110 016; 1995; pp. 127; Rs. 75/-.

The book under review offers a superb, radiant, powerful and perspective picture of Hanuman set against the background of Ramayana.

In the first four chapters entitled 'Kishkindhakand and Hanuman', 'The Preliminaries and Hanuman', 'Events in Sunderkand', and 'Sunderkand', the main events in Ramayana from the birth of Rama

to Hanuman's visit to Lanka as a messenger of Rama to retrieve Sita kidnapped by Ravana are described in a vivid, interest-provoking and fluent style. Lively descriptions of the forest scenery, seasons, of cities and of the war find place in the text. There is a depiction of characters bringing out their emotional response. The book is interspersed with selected verses from the Valmiki Ramayana and the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas.

What catches the attention of the reviewer is the emergence of the vibrant and towering personality of Hanuman in various roles: ideal servant, advisor, minister, secretary, messenger, contingent commander and negotiator. Notwithstanding this multifaceted personality of Hanuman, the author, as mentioned by him in the preface, has tried to present Hanuman as an ideal of profound servitude to Rama.

The author has noticed the influence of Hanuman on policemen and other service holders, particularly in North India. This influence is limited only to their dress and food habits and not on their performance of duties with sincerity. This had prompted him—an accomplished writer, painter and sculptor—to write on Hanuman highlighting the entire range of traits which characterize an ideal servant: sincerity to the backbone, devotion, wisdom, valiance, modesty blended with strength, capacity to take speedy and judicial remedial action on behalf of his Master, capacity to perform with perfection such acts as are entrusted to him, compassion and a readiness to help those in distress. Observing that our country today lags behind due to the absence of all these traits in our countrymen, the author has shown convincingly that if Hanuman becomes the ideal of the masses, surely society will be raised to the highest level of culture and civilization.

The style of presentation is so charming that one is compelled to read the book at one stretch. The printing and getup are of a high standard.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Junagadh

THE POWER OF GOD'S NAME

One day during their wandering, Guru Nanak and his beloved disciple Mardana, reached as far as Assam. Looking ahead, they found flames of fire leaping in the air. Mardana remarked in surprise to Guru Nanak, 'I wonder how this fire broke out so suddenly.' Before Nanakdev could reply, the fire just as soon extinguished itself. 'How amazing,' exclaimed Mardana.

Guru Nanak replied, 'Mardana, in Assam magic and witchcraft are widely prevalent.' 'Is there really any truth in this witchcraft and magic?' asked Mardana. 'Apart from Wahguru (the Victorious Lord of all) there is no other truth. In the presence of the great Lord, magic loses all its potency,' assured Nanak as they continued to walk.

Now, as it was getting late in the day, they decided to make camp for the night. Mardana then set off to procure food from a nearby village. As destiny would have it, however, a magician happened to notice this stranger Mardana. Soon, with the aid of a powerful mantra he turned Mardana into a bird and locked him up in a cage.

After waiting long for Mardana's return, Nanak realized through his own power the trouble his disciple was in. He could also see the magician's wickedness.

Totally unperturbed, Guru Nanak immediately set out for the magician's abode. Reaching the gate, he called out just once, 'Mardana!' No sooner had he called than the cage shattered and Mardana freed from the bird form came out in human form and with folded hands stood before Guru Nanak.

Seeing this miraculous power of holiness, the magician felt repentant and confessed that he had planned it all in advance and had in fact tried hard to overpower the Guru with his mantra; but, having failed, he had captured Mardana. Now he realized that Guru Nanak was a highly evolved saint; no mantras could affect him—not even those who had taken refuge under him.

'That is not so,' corrected the Guru. 'The fact is, my Lord is far greater than your spirits.'

'Then, won't you please let me have your Lord's mantra?' implored the magician.

'Very well, here is the mantra', said Guru Nanak: 'Only the One God's Name is true. He is the Creator of this whole universe, fearless, ageless, birthless, deathless. I desire only the grace of that God.' The magician repeated the mantra and became his disciple.

Now, another from among the astonished group that had gathered there threw up a test before the guru: 'Sir, the water at this place is very brackish. If you sweeten it, we shall accept your God to be as great as you proclaim.' Hearing this, the Guru plunged his spear into the ground, and lo! a fountain of fresh cool water gushed forth from there. Still incredulous, all present tasted it and found it sweet like nectar! They too were thus humbled and, bowing down to the Guru, became his disciples.

That place so sanctified long ago is now known as 'Baracchā Sāhib.